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Official Records

115th plenary meeting
Thursday, 28 July 2011, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mac-Donald (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27 (*continued*)

High-level Meeting on Youth

Social development

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this High-level Meeting on youth, dialogue and mutual understanding as the International Year of Youth draws to a close.

Lebanon is in a region where one fifth of the population is between 15 and 24 years old. More than half of our population is below the age of 25. There are a great many problems facing youth in the Arab region, most important of which is the high rate of youth unemployment, particularly among girls — one of the highest in the world.

While tangible progress has been made in education over the past two decades, the rate of illiteracy, at more than 17 per cent, is still gravely high among young people. The quality of education is worsening in many instances. Despite the notable progress achieved in the filed of health, the degree of health awareness is still low among young people. Yet more dangerous is the growing sense of marginalization and repression among a wide spectrum of youth because of their weak participation in public life, in particular in decision-making processes. These are some of the reasons behind the waves of youth protests our region has seen over the past decades and the demands for improvements, in particular since last year.

On this occasion we emphasize that the aspirations of our young people to participate fully in building their own future are legitimate. The world of tomorrow is theirs; this cannot be denied. It is no exaggeration to say that the vitality, humanity and spirit of inventiveness of youth are the best hopes for their future, for socio-economic development and scientific development and technological invention.

We therefore emphasize the need for the United Nations, including specialized agencies, programmes and funds, to continue to support youth empowerment and the implementation of international obligations, in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this connection, we emphasize the need for young people to acquire information and communications technology, and the United Nations and donor countries should do their best to bridge the digital gap between the North and the South.

We hope that young people will continue to work towards the goals of peace — peace that leads to justice and security, to a world free of weapons of mass destruction. That means we must foster a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding among young

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people at the local, regional and international levels. We express our support for the resolution 65/312, containing the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of San Marino.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): On behalf of the Republic of San Marino, which I have the honour to represent, I wish to extend our deepest condolences to the families of the young people struck down in Norway a few days ago.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in dealing with youth issues. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Benin for facilitating the negotiations over the text of the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding (resolution 65/312), which reaffirms the World Programme of Action for Youth and outlines the path for achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Today is the end of the International Year of Youth, but it is also the beginning of a new, exciting era for the new generation. In the Mediterranean and many other parts of the world, they have shown their determination to challenge their Governments in the streets and to fight for their rightful desire for a freer and better future.

Did our generation plan properly for its successors? Did we understand our young people's aspirations? Unfortunately, we did not do a good job. Millions of young people do not enjoy satisfactory security. Too many are dying from starvation, disease and war. Millions have no proper education or have no education at all. Too many are exploited sexually, or as underpaid workers or conscripted soldiers. A very large percentage are either unemployed or underemployed. Most have precarious jobs.

We cannot allow this nightmare to continue. We must re-energize our efforts from North to South, in developing and developed countries. We must act in a coordinated manner to provide prosperity and justice to our youth and restore in them a much-needed sense of dignity before it is too late.

We must find a focal point where all our efforts converge. Non-governmental organizations, schools, universities, corporations and the private and public sectors in every country must focus on the following priorities. We must protect our young people, mentally and physically. We must provide them with an effective education and create job security for them. We must give them a sense of belonging in our societies. And we must involve them in the decision-making process.

The United Nations is an ideal venue where we can exchange ideas, where we can help our future generations to understand one another and, in doing so, create a better and more peaceful world.

How can we enhance the well-being of our children? By renewing strong family ties and values, and by expanding social projects in which the underprivileged are at the centre of our efforts and those of our young people. We can sustain political systems in which human rights are protected, and we can offer our experience without imposing our way of thinking. We must always motivate and praise the efforts of young people when they are helping less fortunate peers. We must always encourage them to pursue their ideals of peace, freedom and dignity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Andorra.

Mr. Casal de Fonsdeviela (Andorra) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by offering our deepest condolences to the people and Government of Norway on the tragedy that struck their young people in particular, and also our firm support. It is so painful to have to begin a statement on the International Year of Youth with these sentiments, but dialogue and mutual understanding are the objectives of the International Year. Those objectives remain, more than ever, despite everything that has happened.

Young people are the future, a future that begins in the present, whatever that present may be — but always with the intention of improving it. We all agree that we are living in a world of change, in which it is hard to find values and reference points that can help guide young people towards the future. While this is true for adults, it is even more true for our young people, and of course the economic crisis has reinforced that feeling of instability and uncertainty.

Young people are among the primary victims of this crisis. To deny them access to the job market is to deny them a future and their prospects for full development. Paradoxically, it is young people who

have the energy to pull us out of this recession, and therefore States cannot forget the educational programmes through which they promote justice, liberty, courage and solidarity.

As the Secretary-General said, it is essential for young people to learn to listen carefully to each other, to empathize, to recognize the existence of differing opinions and to resolve conflicts. Young people do not need to be told what their needs are or how to achieve them. We must facilitate their efforts and provide them with the tools they need to achieve those goals.

In Andorra we believe in a few guiding principles with regard to young people: youth policies are for young people, of young people and with young people; young people have one identity that is based on a number of concepts; there is no such thing as a world of young people separate from the other citizens; and lastly, we believe that young people are citizens of Andorra but also of the world.

(*spoke in French*)

In order to promote these principles, in 2007 my Government created the National Youth Forum of Andorra. This independent body of young people and for young people is aimed at channelling voluntary participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country. This initiative was strengthened at the end of 2009 by the Interministerial Youth Commission beginning its work. The Commission is made up of representatives from the Departments of Youth, Higher Education and Research, Culture, Housing, Health, Labour, the Interior, Social Welfare, and Statistics. The values that we advocate for young people — consensus, respect and dialogue — are the basic principles of our youth law, drafted with the consensus of regional institutions and social stakeholders.

We are also aware of the fact that providing young people with the means they need to attain full development is not enough. We must go beyond our borders and contribute to international programmes in this area. Andorra has shown its commitment to youth through, among other things, its support, totalling more than €90,000, to the United Nations Fund for Youth.

We must all continue recognizing and exploring what contribution youth can make to the creation of a fairer and safer world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Abbasi, Acting Minister of Youth and Sport of the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose visa to attend this meeting was unfortunately not granted by the host country.

At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's condolences to the people and Government of Norway for the very tragic terrorist incident in which many young people were killed.

One of the main criteria for the evaluation of the progress and evolution of a country in today's world is the status of young people in that country. Indeed, the younger generation is the main potential for progress and dynamism in any society. The negative or less-than-optimal utilization of that potential could have a corrosive effect on the progress of that society. Therefore, it is reasonable for a society to provide for suitable education, welfare, recreation, training and vocational facilities for youth.

Sociologists maintain that young societies usually face what they call a "revolution of aspirations". This brings about intricacies and difficulties in the normal process of political and economic development, requiring special attention on the part of policymakers and practitioners so as to prevent the alienation of young people from society.

Meanwhile, the international community's meaningful and supportive cooperation in addressing the genuine aspirations of young people is critical at the present time, when the manipulation of art, technology and the modern media, along with increasing discrimination and inequalities, are some of its main shortfalls.

Iranian society, where young people comprise almost 60 per cent of the population, is described by sociologists as among the youngest societies in the world. Accordingly, meeting the needs and addressing the aspirations of youth have been and remain among the top priorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Based on this understanding, the statute of the High Council of Youth was adopted in 1992, with the aim of coordinating and supervising the role and functioning of youth institutions and organizations, and preparing the ground for emerging social centres to stimulate

youth creativity and potential in the field of culture, science and sport and providing them with job opportunities, marriage facilities, et cetera.

The National Youth Organization has been another main active organ responsible for the implementation of policies in this area. And in practice, there have been a number of initiatives to help young people realize their full potential.

I am distinctly pleased to inform the Assembly that in order to institutionalize this lofty goal of addressing the demands and aspirations of youth, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has been established at the Cabinet level over the past few months in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is expected that this development will have a significant impact in terms of making national plans on youth more integrated and effective than before.

Meanwhile, and in keeping with the increased attention on the part of regional and international bodies to this issue, the First Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Ministerial Meeting on Youth Affairs was held on 29 and 30 November 2010 in Tehran, hosted and organized by the National Youth Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran in collaboration with the ECO Cultural Institute.

Our recent national performance has proven that whenever the young generation is given chances and opportunities, regardless of barriers, they can make leapfrog progress in different fields, such as biotechnology, medical science, nuclear science and aerospace, to name just a few. Our progress shows the power of the younger generation in society and the ineffectiveness of challenges such as sanctions vis-à-vis the ironclad determination of youth, if and when they wish to determine their own future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we gather here to discuss the topic of youth, we meet to talk about the future of humankind and the planet. But young people are not only the future; they are also the present. That is why we must act without further delay to face the serious problems affecting young people around the world.

At present, there are more 1.2 billion young people around the world — more than ever before in the history of humankind — and 85 per cent of them live in developing countries. In 2025, there will be approximately 72 million more young people than today.

Youth undoubtedly represents a formidable force for tackling the colossal current challenges. However, young people can be a driving force only if they have health, education and employment. To realize their full potential, young people need a world of peace. Young people have the right to be protected and fully involved in mechanisms for citizen participation and decision-making. They have the right to live in a world free of war and violence. They want, and deserve, a better future.

All these concerns were expressed at the World Festival of Youth and Students, a momentous event held last December in South Africa, with over 15,000 young people from 136 nations attending.

The situation facing Cuban young people is very different from that in much of the world. Cuban young people — accounting for 20 per cent of our population — enjoy broad protection and participate actively in the affairs of our society and State. Over 50 per cent of Cuba's total budget is allocated to health care, education, assistance, social welfare and culture.

Cuba's completely free health-care system of renowned quality and our universal and equally free education system are essential pillars of the humanistic vision of the Cuban revolution. Cuba provides 100 per cent of the education required by children and young people with special educational needs. The literacy rate among the population between 15 and 49 years old is 99.6 per cent. Cuba has a solid legal and institutional framework for the protection of children and young people from violence, abuse, mistreatment and discrimination.

Even with these successes, we do not claim to be perfect. Much remains to be done.

These achievements have been made despite enormous obstacles. The criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States Government against Cuba for more than half a century, terrorist aggressions and acts, and the permanent hostile anti-Cuba policy of successive United States Administrations have denied Cuban young people the possibility to develop in a more favourable social environment.

In those difficult circumstances, Cuba has not only achieved significant results; we have also shared what we have, and not in moderation. Since 1961, more than 55,000 students from 135 countries have graduated in Cuba. At present, about 26,000 young people from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa study in Cuba without cost. Of those, 22,000 are studying in the medical field. Currently, some 57,000 Cuban collaborators provide their services in more than 98 countries.

To conclude, I would like to underscore that young people are by definition revolutionary. That is why we are optimistic and are fully confident that young people will find new ways of change that push humankind to achieve a better world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Ruiz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia extends its deepest condolences to the people and Government of Norway and condemns the brutal attacks that dozens of young people of that nation have just suffered.

My country thanks the United Nations for organizing this High-level Meeting on Youth and its valuable work in coordinating the direction and promotion of critical issues that affect the world's young people, such as strengthening international cooperation for youth through dialogue, mutual understanding and active participation so as to achieve social integration, employment and the eradication of poverty. We also believe that Member States, civil society organizations, international cooperation associations and the United Nations system have worked to promote the development and active participation of young people in society. One such example is the World Programme of Action for Youth and international conferences on that issue.

Colombia — slightly more than 50 per cent of whose current population is under the age of 25 — is satisfied with the outcome document of this critical Meeting (resolution 65/312). We believe that it will be a bastion for strengthening policies, programmes, actions and outcomes for the world's youth. In addition, with regard to that concept of strengthening, Colombia has called for more concrete and effective actions to bolster the rights of young people and make youth more visible as an essential sectoral axis in the development of integrated and intergenerational policies. That will be of great importance in establishing a United Nations agency for youth.

Such an agency would help to ensure the synchronization and implementation of cooperative youth activities without that agency replacing Government responsibilities and authority on the issue. On the contrary, establishing a United Nations agency for youth would mean, at the level of each nation, greater commitment to and support for the institutional strengthening of national youth systems. It would generate more timely local commitment on the matter.

In addition, Colombia believes that greater coordination and integration in the United Nations system on youth issues, centred on an agency, would promote the effective participation of young people in decision-making bodies. We should acknowledge the important work carried out by the World Programme of Action for Youth. That is an essential basis for our continued support.

The logic behind public youth policies must seek to ensure human development planning with a view to vital intergenerational contact that maximizes investment in adolescents and takes advantage of the demographic asset.

Colombia would like to underscore the work done to complement ratified international agreements, such as those of the San Salvador summit, which generated approaches calling for greater public and private institutionalization of the development of children, adolescents and young people and for their involvement in short-, medium- and long-term public policy decision-making and activities.

In that regard, Colombia has undertaken activities such as creating conditions for the effective universal enjoyment of youth rights and/or for restoring them when such rights have been removed. We have created conditions for the long-term reduction and eradication of conditions that restrict young people's equitable access to various rights, and conditions that permit their participation in the shaping and provision of services that they desire and need. We have also created and broadened opportunities for young people to further their potential through access to services designed in line with their various social, economic, political, family, cultural and geographic needs, and to develop their capacity to acknowledge both their rights and duties and their involvement and participation in the country's decision-making in an informed way.

Finally, Colombia appeals to Ibero-American States to ratify the commitments made at the 2010 Santo Domingo summit of heads of State.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Madagascar.

Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, the Government of Madagascar extends its sincere condolences to the Norwegian Government and people following the terrible massacre of innocent people, which runs counter to our promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding.

Young people are a pillar of our development. In that regard, allow me to congratulate the President on this excellent initiative, which will certainly breathe new life into actions already undertaken to place young people at the core of every dialogue, every decision and every effort at local, national, regional and international levels.

Madagascar fully associates itself with the statement of the Group of 77 and China delivered at the 112th meeting.

As we near the end of the International Year of Youth, it is more pressing than ever to step up commitments towards an active and dynamic youth, partners and full participants in efforts for dialogue and mutual understanding among generations, cultures and people, and to bolster the effective implementation of such commitments.

Effective and tangible global development requires the flourishing and development of young people. Unfortunately, the reality is completely different. Every day, young people, in particular those in countries of the South, face considerable challenges: unemployment, limited or even no access to education and health care systems, socio-economic instability caused by various conflicts, and exposure to drugs, prostitution, sexual violence, modern slavery and many more.

It is our duty to find sustainable solutions to such challenges. That is why we are gathered here. Governments and civil society actors, in particular young people, must work together to find the way forward. The theme chosen for this meeting and for the International Year of Youth — dialogue and mutual understanding — is completely in step with that absolute need to work together in understanding and respecting our diversities.

The Malagasy population is slightly less than 22 million people, of whom 6 million — that is, 31 per cent — are between the ages of 10 and 24. The Malagasy Government, with the support of its partners and friendly countries, is sparing no effort in placing its young people at the centre of its priorities. To that end, it is directing efforts to creating conditions conducive to the full development of the young Malagasy, through a clear, well-defined judicial, legislative and technical framework, as well as through its national youth policy.

For example, Madagascar has established a National Institute for Youth, which organizes various courses, and the Ministry of Youth and Recreation has launched a community awareness programme on adolescent reproductive health. The Malagasy Government has started a youth investment fund and has undertaken a number of projects aimed at fostering young people's development and strengthening their leadership in the national life of the country. Our National Youth Council, at the local, regional and national levels, also strengthens youth structures and institutions. Our youth centres, which exist all over the island, and which the Government has made efforts to improve in recent years, are an important tool for young people's intellectual and social development.

Besides this, Madagascar — which has not been spared by the scourge of human trafficking, most of whose victims are young people — has instituted a national programme to counter human enslavement and human trafficking of young people. In order to combat sexually transmitted diseases, which affect young people in particular, we have launched various efforts to raise awareness and provide support, such as an anonymous, confidential and free telephone hotline for young people, which is available in all of Madagascar's 22 regions.

Our population is largely rural, and the Government has just launched a rural youth development project designed to support and encourage young agricultural entrepreneurs. Youth discussion clubs in 20 regions of Madagascar, with a membership of young people aged between 13 and 24, have been active since 2007, allowing them to express their views and exchange ideas on important issues such as conservation of the environment, education and

peace, and to broadcast them on weekly radio programmes.

The Government of Madagascar welcomes resolution 65/312, adopted by this High-level Meeting, and calls on the international community to guarantee follow-up to its commitments, particularly those concerning the World Programme of Action for Youth. We also call on Member States to increase their support for young people by implementing national policies and projects.

The number of young people in the world continues to grow, and their needs are enormous. The mobilization of resources must be genuine. The financial and technical support for young people at all levels must be maintained and increased, particularly in developing countries, including Madagascar, in order to guarantee young people's true development and growth, and to afford them the genuine possibility of taking a leadership role in sustainable and equitable development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Raza Tarar (Pakistan): I take this opportunity to convey on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the people of Norway on the terrorist incidents of last Friday. Such despicable acts only strengthen our resolve to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the 112th meeting.

Today's meeting assumes a special importance in view of the myriad problems besetting humanity. Hunger, disease, climate change, terrorism, the unfulfilled promises of disarmament and multiple global crises all combine to conjure up a depressing picture. Only through dialogue and mutual understanding can we work in harmony to realize our common objectives. The theme of this Meeting, therefore, is most apt. Pakistan fully supports educating youth about the ideals of peace, justice, tolerance and solidarity to lay the foundation of a peaceful world and to achieve the objectives of progress and development.

With a population of more than 173 million, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world. An estimated 104 million Pakistanis are below the age of 30. This youth bulge carries challenges and opportunities. Our young people are our greatest resource. In order to unlock their true potential, the Government of Pakistan has taken several steps and initiatives to enable our young people to fulfil their role in Pakistan's socio-economic development.

The National Youth Policy, formulated in 2008, aims at empowering young people and providing them with economic opportunities by integrating various youth programmes at both the federal and provincial levels. It puts special emphasis on addressing the needs of young women and youth with disabilities. Also worth mentioning is our National Vocational and Technical Education Commission, which strengthens younger workers by mobilizing funds and technical training, sponsored by private-sector and civil society organizations. In addition, the National Internship Programme, through paid internships, enables new graduates to work in various public sector organizations, helping to increase their employability.

Recent events in many parts of the world have shown that young people are the catalyst of political and social change. The voices of young women and men must be heard and respected. Their expectations and aspirations must be met by involving them in the decision-making process and allowing them to shape their own future and that of our world. While the primary responsibility for ensuring young people's development lies with individual States and their development of comprehensive policies and strategies, international cooperation remains a helpful tool for harnessing youth's potential, and particularly for ensuring equitable distribution of global resources and promoting non-discriminatory policies.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica welcomes the convening of this High-level Meeting as the diplomatic and political apex of the International Year of Youth.

Young people are an inescapable reality, full of energy and hope, and as such they must be taken into account in all our policies and actions, both nationally and multilaterally.

Costa Rica believes that it is every State's responsibility to acknowledge, promote and defend the

basic rights of young people, within the framework of the promotion of human rights in general. Respect for their rights and opening up the opportunities that derive from them are key to eradicating poverty, injustice, intolerance and inequality, and are essential to the creation of opportunities for self-realization among young people.

These convictions form the basis of our country's pioneering youth legislation establishing the national youth system. The system brings together State institutions and organized participation of civil society. Our public youth policy is proposed by the State but discussed and approved in all its aspects by a body that includes youth representatives.

Over the past few years, in order to meet the needs and respond to the proposals of our young population, and on the basis of an inclusive, democratic and free social vision, Costa Rica has focused on areas such as the promotion of entrepreneurship, the generation of employment opportunities, the right to recreation and comprehensive health care. We have also made a solid commitment to education, which is an essential part of our national identity and policies.

When it comes to youth issues, as with so many other issues, national responsibility is paramount, but it is also essential to involve the international community in order to achieve the implementation of the outcome document of this meeting (resolution 65/312) and of the World Programme of Action for Youth. We believe it is extremely important to create a matrix of indicators on the basis of the World Programme and the goals and objectives proposed in the outcome document. It will be particularly important to achieve the implementation of the commitments contained in the outcome document concerning the promotion of gender equality and equity and an acknowledgement of the particular vulnerability of girls and young people. The document quite rightly condemns the recruitment and use of young people in armed conflict. Costa Rica believes that the recruitment of young people for transporting drugs and organized crime activities is equally reprehensible.

The theme of this International Year of Youth, "Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding", requires us to take a look at education, respecting the rights and duties of our young people. To a great extent, comprehensive education promotes values such as dialogue for resolving differences on the basis of the quest for mutual understanding.

We particularly welcome, therefore, the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training adopted by the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 23 March (HRC resolution 16/1). The text was presented by Costa Rica, Italy, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, Slovenia and Switzerland, the countries that make up the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training. Its primary objective is to develop a universal culture of human rights in which every individual is aware of his or her rights and responsibilities to others, and to promote the development of individuals as responsible members of an inclusive, free, tolerant, peaceful and pluralistic society. We welcome the fact that this premise was included in the outcome document of this High-level Meeting.

Our country reiterates the importance for the General Assembly, in accordance with the Human Rights Council Declaration and in implementation of resolution 60/251, to adopt the Declaration proposed by the Human Rights Council.

There is no greater criminal proof of intolerance and disrespect for life and dignity then terrorism, in particular when the targets are primarily young people. Costa Rica therefore emphatically condemns the terrorist attacks that took place in Norway on Tuesday. Its primary victims were young people who, because of their commitment to society, were participating in a Labour Party camp on the island of Utøya. We express our solidarity with their families, the Government and the people of Norway. We know that the response to this tragedy will be a greater commitment to tolerance and freedom.

I conclude by urging all States to act on the premises agreed on in the outcome document of this meeting. That will be the best possible way to give all young people the opportunity to fulfil their potential and use their energy and enthusiasm in service to the great tasks facing humanity.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Cabral (Portugal): Allow me to congratulate President Deiss on having organized this High-level Meeting, which marks the end of the International Year of Youth. We would also like to thank the two

co-facilitators, Ambassadors Thomas Mayr-Harting of Austria and Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou of Benin, for their hard work in achieving a consensus outcome document (resolution 65/312).

We are pleased to note that this high-level event firmly reiterates the World Programme of Action for Youth, including its 15 interrelated priority areas. Portugal reiterates its commitment to promoting and implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth and to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We stress the need to strengthen international cooperation in support of national efforts to implement the World Programme of Action, and call upon all Member States to continue to implement it as a unified set of guiding principles for policies and programmes involving youth at the national, regional and international levels.

Portugal's commitment to the development and implementation of policies and programmes related to youth is unquestionable. I recall that it was on the basis of a recommendation made at the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in 1998, that the General Assembly declared 12 August as International Youth Day. Our goal is to strengthen policies and programmes involving youth, as well as to ensure a cross-sectoral participation by young people as major actors and active agents in all the decision-making steps of national, regional and international policies involving them.

Last year, we created the National Commission for the International Year of Youth, composed of both Government and youth organization representatives, which put in place a very comprehensive calendar of activities throughout the country addressing issues such as entrepreneurship and innovation, rights and equality, culture and diversity, and youth empowerment and democracy. In this framework, I would like to highlight the Second National Forum of Young Descendants of Immigrants and the African Diaspora, which took place in Portugal in February and which we believe helped to further a number of issues concerning youth.

During the next session of the General Assembly, Portugal will again present, in the Third Committee, together with Moldova and Senegal, its biennial draft resolution on policies and programmes involving youth. We also presented and facilitated the resolution on the subject during the most recent session of the Commission for Social Development in February.

Let me again stress the importance of young people as active agents for dialogue, positive change and development in global society and their role in stimulating tolerance and mutual understanding. Nevertheless, one major obstacle to young people playing their role to the full extent remains violence, of which they are the primary targets and to which, on so many different occasions and in so many different forms, they are exposed in a particularly acute way. Violence and the exploitation of children and youth in its many forms is one of the most important challenges facing the international community. It must therefore come to an end.

Portugal expresses strong support for the universal ratification campaign of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We encourage all Member States not yet parties to sign or to ratify the Optional Protocols during the high-level segment of the General Assembly in September. We hope that this International Year will also contribute to that goal.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): I should like at the outset to express my country's solidarity with the Government of Norway and its people. Last week, on the very day of the attacks, my President sent his condolences and those of the entire people of Kazakhstan in connection with the tragedy. I myself grieved deeply; what greater crime could there be than atrocities against young people and children? This meeting is therefore most timely.

Kazakhstan commends the progress achieved in effectively implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which represents an important road map. However, much more needs to be done to ensure closer monitoring and evaluation of the manner in which youth-related issues are incorporated into national policies to ensure the mainstreaming of our future leaders into the political, social, economic and cultural life of each of our Member States and their development agendas. We must also ensure the greater integration of youth-

related issues in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, so that young people can be included in the existing order as well as serve as agents of social transformation.

My delegation calls for greater United Nations system-wide coherence and coordination and for the streamlining of the youth-related work of the 34 agencies that are focusing on the least developed countries and conflict zones, especially as concerns young women and girls. Hence we call on Member States to provide greater support in terms of funding and resources so as to make possible technical guidance and capacity-building with a view to implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth.

In view of last week's tragedy, every effort must be made to monitor social media and channel the energy of youth, as well as fund youth movements that foster harmony.

During the International Year of Youth, Kazakhstan has implemented a multidimensional, interdisciplinary and results-oriented national youth policy. Particular attention has been paid to enhancing social protection, reducing unemployment and improving educational opportunities for youth. According to my President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, youth socialization, the shaping of progressive attitudes and the imparting of modern values to the young generation are vital for national development. The country has therefore adopted the State educational programme 2011-2020 and an action plan with forward-looking measures and services, including the establishment of the modern and innovative New University. Quality education for youth is a prerequisite for social and economic well-being, and expenditure on education is claimed as a priority area for State budget funding in my country.

Kazakhstan established a Council on Youth Policy, under the auspices of the President, to mobilize youth participation in national policy decision-making and development. In addition, a national project on the youth talent pool was launched with a view to promoting decent employment for young people in public service and in the social, political and economic spheres. Since 2005, the youth labour movement, Green Country, has been a key player in connection with the country's ecological issues and environmental policy.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its strong commitment to promoting dialogue and mutual understanding by addressing the challenges affecting youth and contributing to multilateral efforts to give youth their rightful place as one of our richest resources.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): I would like to begin by offering my Government's condolences to the people and the Government of Norway following last week's appalling attacks in Oslo and Utøya. The victims of this tragedy — most of whom were young people — remain in our thoughts and prayers.

There is a Jewish story about a man who planted a carob tree, a tree that is known to bear fruit only after 70 years. When asked whether he thought he would live to eat from the tree, the man replied: "I am doing as my ancestors did. Just as they planted a carob tree for me, I am planting one for my children".

The commitment of one generation to the next is the foundation of strong and healthy societies. Protecting, integrating and empowering its young people stands as a fundamental obligation of every State. We must not neglect young people who find themselves on the margins.

Over the past 20 years, Israel has developed a comprehensive approach to respond to the needs of at-risk youth through major advances in legislation and increased public awareness. Israel launched a national programme for children and youth at risk in 2008 encompassing five Government ministries. This initiative has advanced a number of unique projects designed to reabsorb at-risk youth into the community, including through vocational and entrepreneurship training. These programmes are designed to meet the needs of Israel's diverse population, which includes immigrants from around the world.

Israel strongly supports the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. It was the most comprehensive document on the issue of youth at the time of its adoption in 1995. Sixteen years later, it remains just as valid, providing a policy framework for both national and international action to improve the situation of young people.

At the international level, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) has trained hundreds of thousands of educators and

young people from all over the world. For example, MASHAV's Mount Carmel International Training Centre has been cooperating for a decade with the Organization of American States with a view to introducing entrepreneurship as a self-help tool for young people in the Americas. The project has trained more than 22,000 people across 29 countries in Latin America and in the Caribbean islands.

In the past year, numerous courses in English and Spanish have been held within the framework of the United Nations International Year of Youth on subjects including entrepreneurial skills for youth and business management for young people.

Israel strongly supports paragraph 28(h) of the outcome document (resolution 65/312) of the High-level Meeting on Youth, which underscores the need to protect young people affected or exploited by terrorism and incitement. Israel knows these challenges all too well. The struggle against terrorism calls for vigilance, resolve and collective action on the part of the international community. We must focus on promoting cultures of tolerance and mutual understanding instead of violence and hate, putting an end to the incitement of young people that is all too common in many corners of the world.

Many of the greatest lines of separation we see in the world today are not between civilizations, but rather between generations. Facebook, Twitter and a range of other tools are creating exponential changes and providing new opportunities for people to interact, learn and grow. Those raised in the digital age will serve as our bridge to the future.

I see this demonstrated in Israel, where our younger minds serve as a powerful force for innovation. Youth who would have once grown oranges are now producing Orange mobile phones. Those who would have in the past cultivated apples are now designing Apple computers.

The challenges before the international community call on us to tap into the creativity of the next generation. We must empower and encourage all of our youth to take up responsibility in the global community and to seize the opportunities and harness the new technologies before us in order to create a more prosperous, more tolerant and more peaceful world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Mahmood (Bangladesh): Let me begin by extending our heartfelt condolences to the families of the 68 persons who were victims of the gruesome killing in Norway last week. Every life on this Earth is precious, and we are so sad to note that most of those killed were young people attending a summer youth camp.

Bangladesh appreciates the holding of this High-level Meeting on Youth and the adoption of the outcome document (resolution 65/312). Young people are the most important resource of a country. A nation's development and prosperity mostly depends on the positive activities of its youth.

In Bangladesh, the Department of Youth Development was established in 1981 with a view to bringing the nation's youth into the mainstream of our country's national development process by providing proper guidance, motivation and needs-based development training. To engage unemployed youths in the national development process, the Department has been implementing massive programmes on motivation, skill development training, self-employment, microcredit support and community development, so that trained youths can set up self-employment projects with a view to reducing poverty.

In Bangladesh, until June 2010, about 3.43 million young people were trained in different sectors, particularly in computers, including Internet and networking; graphic design and video editing; livestock, poultry, pisciculture and agriculture; tailoring; block, batik and screen printing; electronics and electrical and house wiring; refrigeration and air conditioning, and so on.

The average income of a self-employed youth ranges from $20 to $670 per month. In some cases, successful self-employed youths earn more than $1,300 per month in a country where average per capita income is merely $670 per annum. Moreover, a good number of trained youths have obtained jobs in different organizations at home and abroad. As of May 2010, $120 million had been disbursed under a microcredit programme for establishing or expanding self-employment projects. The loan recovery rate is nearly 90 per cent.

Pursuant to its election manifesto, the present Government has introduced a national service programme for providing employment to unemployed youths who have completed their secondary education. They are employed for two years on a temporary basis. Initially, three poverty-stricken districts were selected. The unemployed youths receive three months of basic training on 10 selected modules and are then assigned to different nation-building departments, autonomous bodies or local Government bodies, and so on.

Volunteer youth and Government organizations are also playing significant role in the rural development. To promote the active participation of youth organizations in the development process, the Department of Youth Development has taken steps to enlist youth organizations. About 14,000 youth organizations have already been enlisted with the Department.

On 12 August 2010, International Youth Day was observed in Bangladesh with due solemnity. At the national level, the Day started with a rally that was followed by a seminar on dialogue and mutual understanding, in line with the selected theme for the International Year of Youth. A huge number of youth leaders were engaged in the opening and closing ceremony of the eleventh South Asian Games and the World Cup Cricket inaugural ceremony that recently took place in Dhaka.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to converting today's youth into tomorrow's most productive sector of society and to ensuring that the Government increasingly emphasizes meeting the education and training needs of young people, encouraging their moral development and taking measures within the limited resources available to create job opportunities for them.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Russian Federation was pleased to join the consensus adoption of the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding (resolution 65/312). We should like to express our gratitude to the coordinators and all of the participants in the negotiation process. Thanks to their constructive and crucial approach, we were able to reach agreement on the outcome document that reflects the interests of all States.

Today's meeting, the culmination of the International Year of Youth, is a way not only to evaluate the results of increasing understanding of and focus on the interests of youth, but also to increase the active participation of youth in all areas of life and create a way for them to empower themselves. It is also a launching pad for defining objectives for the future.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the issue of youth. There are 40 million people in our country, representing some 27 per cent of the population. Let us not forget that while young people are among the most active participants in society, they are the hardest hit by the consequences of different types of crises. Young people, at the beginning of their life's path, are often unable to deal with such consequences.

In addition to enjoying great mobility, young people are readily able to adapt themselves to new conditions and acquire new knowledge. Clear proof of this fact is the role of young people in recent world events. Great hopes are also placed on young people as a primary motor of overcoming the adverse impacts of the global financial and economic crisis. That is the very reason that the Russian Federation is providing for young generations as a long-term investment in a stable and flourishing society.

The implementation of coordinated policies in that respect has been taken up by the Russian Federation's Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy. The Federal Agency for Youth also operates under that Ministry. It is a national State body whose activities are concentrated on developing youth potential in Russia.

Our country's policies and programmes to guarantee the interests and rights of young people are in step with the priorities of the United Nations, including the World Programme of Action for Youth. The priorities formed a basis for events that took place in 2009 in the context of the Year of Youth in Russia, which sought to bolster the professional and creative potential of youth, advocate a moral and healthy way of life, and cultivate the ideals of peace and understanding among peoples.

On 27 June every year since 1993, we have celebrated the Day of Youth in Russia, on which

meetings, concerts, and sporting and other types of events are held throughout the country. On 27 June this year, a meeting was held between the Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth of the Russian Federation with leaders of youth movements at which discussions were focused, inter alia, on the International Year of Youth.

Current economic and social conditions call for particular attention to be paid to issues relating to enhancing the well-being of young people by resolving issues such as their professional placement and stable employment. In that regard, the federal target programme, Young People in Russia 2011-2015, will be a key document over the next five years. This document is designed to create conditions conducive to successful socialization and effective empowerment of young people by fostering their participation in the social and political life of the country, and by using their potential to further innovation in our country.

The International Year has been a striking demonstration that young people are not only recipients of State aid, but can themselves contribute to their countries and the international community as a whole. The Year also showed the need to create an environment where young people can be integrated into all areas of social life so as to increase their contribution to the social and economic development of States.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Allow me at the outset to express my country's condolences to the people and Government of Norway for the tragic loss of all those young people who were taken away by a senseless and unimaginable act of terrorism.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The future of our societies depends on the future of our young people. In particular, it depends on what we policymakers can do to enable young people to participate in society, to ensure quality education, to guarantee health services and to create employment opportunities. The current financial and economic crises have had a strong impact on young people, leaving many of them unemployed and living in poverty. This in turn affects their social inclusion, which is key to the sustainability, stability and prosperity of societies.

Young people have to be involved in decision-making processes, including through youth-led organizations. These organizations do not only represent the voice of youth, but are also important forums for the promotion of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding. It is therefore important to strengthen the role of youth and of youth-led organizations and to support their increased involvement in the development of strategies and policies at all levels and on all issues, such as sustainable development, climate change and human rights.

In particular, we should enhance cooperation between youth organizations or platforms from different regions through concrete, grass-roots projects and programmes that directly involve young people. Non-formal education should be considered a core tool to this end.

In working with youth, Slovenia is building on its long-lasting tradition. We encourage youth development and the social integration, personal growth and autonomy of young people through various programmes and projects. The Slovenian Government encourages the creation of conditions for including young people in social and political processes and therefore co-finances the activities of many grass-roots youth and youth work organizations.

Many participatory structures for children and young people have been developed. Young people have their own peer organizations that present their views in decision-making processes at the national and local levels. For example, the youth parliament initiative, where pupils can speak publicly, is a pivotal demonstration of child participation in social and political processes.

Furthermore, the Government has established two consultative bodies that comprise representatives of youth organizations and various ministries on an equal basis. They propose measures and monitor the consideration of youth interests in various public policies at the national level, and in particular they promote youth participation in these processes.

Last but not least, the significance of voluntary work is highly appreciated in Slovenia. We strongly believe that volunteering contributes to the

strengthening of social capital, promotes peace and solidarity, and breaks new ground for sustainable socio-economic development. The role of young volunteers is an effective tool for youth empowerment as it enables them to develop their professional qualifications, academic knowledge and specific skills, contributes to their future work and employment possibilities, and strengthens their social inclusion and cohesion.

Young people are a force for change. Despite growing recognition of their needs, they still continue to be marginalized and ignored in many parts of the world. We must fulfil our obligations and build a prosperous future for them by mobilizing all political strength and instruments and by implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth. We also have to achieve universal ratification of international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. In this respect, Slovenia strongly supports the campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols by 2012.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Togo.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like at the outset to convey to the Assembly the warm and cordial sentiments of the authorities of Togo, in particular the President of the Republic, who is among the youngest Heads of State in the world.

I would also like to convey to the President of the General Assembly and to the co-facilitators, the Ambassadors of Benin and Austria, the vigorous thanks of my Government for their exemplary role in organizing this meeting. This meeting gives us a welcome opportunity to assess the status of youth — a social group that represents a majority of the world population.

The International Year of Youth declared by the United Nations, which began on 12 August 2010, was designed to encourage Member States to step up their actions to improve dialogue and mutual understanding among young people, to promote their participation at all levels, and to work to eliminate all obstacles facing them. In this regard, the major activities undertaken in Togo were aimed at finding innovative solutions to address the unemployment problem, which increases the vulnerability of young people and prevents them from realizing their potential. Our activities also seek to improve the institutional framework for promoting the participation of young people in all national decision-making and public affairs processes.

Actions carried out at the institutional level include the establishment in 2005 of a ministerial department devoted specifically to issues relating to young people and youth employment; the adoption of a national youth policy in 2007; and the establishment and operationalization of the Togo National Youth Council in 2008. More recently, with a view to promoting inclusive dialogue and exchanges among young people themselves, on the one hand, and between young people and Government authorities, on the other, the Government decided to create a National Youth Forum. The first Forum was held from 18 to 20 April and gave an opportunity for an exhaustive consideration of the status of young people in Togo in the light of their new civic engagement. To ensure the lasting effects of this initiative, the Forum will be held every two years.

With regard to the promotion of specific issues affecting young people, in particular those relating to youth employment and social inclusion, the Togolese Government has increased programmes and projects aimed at expanding opportunities and youth employment in both the salaried and independent employment sectors. Emphasis was placed on promoting micro-, small and medium-sized businesses, which are recognized as job creators, through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate the access of young people to credit.

Moreover, two years ago we launched a far-reaching programme to promote civic responsibility and the active participation of young people. The programme has been implemented with the participation of young people, youth organizations and local communities.

In spite of all regional, national and international efforts, Togo believes that only increased solidarity in the framework of an international partnership will enable us to achieve the objectives of the International Year of Youth and to provide follow-up to the World Programme of Action for Youth. The delegation of Togo therefore calls on all States and stakeholders to heed the wise words of an eminent Togolese statesman, who said that no sacrifice is too great if it is made for the future of our youth. The outcome document

adopted by the Assembly on 26 July (resolution 65/312) represents an opportunity to continue our actions to provide timely solutions to the many challenges that young people face.

In conclusion, I reiterate our solidarity and condolences to the Government and people of Norway in the wake of the painful tragedy and loss visited on the peaceful young people of that country. Togo condemns such terrorist acts sadly perpetrated by brazen, lawless individuals.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela reiterates its condemnation of terrorism and all forms of violence, and extends its solidarity to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Norway in this tragic time that has plunged the country into mourning.

My delegation thanks the President of the Assembly for organizing this event. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

On 21 October 2009, Venezuela adopted the People's Power for Youth Act, outlining the rights and obligations of young people in various areas of their social development. Additionally, on 7 July 2011, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, announced the creation of the Ministry of the People's Power for Youth in the context of measures aimed at consolidating the people's power for youth.

Venezuela believes that education is the foundation of social change and an instrument for the liberation of peoples. In my country, the inclusion of youth in the education system is guaranteed at all levels. There were 200,000 university students in Venezuela in 1999; there are now 2.5 million. More than 9.3 million Venezuelans — one third of the population — have access to communication and information technologies, particularly the Internet.

In its article 79, the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela recognizes young people as active agents of development. The Youth Act expands and elaborates on that provision, establishing the National Youth Council to encourage active participation on the part of young people. Over the past 12 years, in the course of the Bolivarian revolution, policies have been established and developed to promote engagement on the part of young people, a large percentage of whom hold responsible positions in institutions of the people's power. Our country hosted the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Congress for Peace and Sovereignty from 28 to 30 June, at which young people pledged to fight to make our region a zone of peace and development.

The successes achieved by our youth in the arts, science, culture and sports during the years of the Bolivarian revolution are evident and undeniable. Venezuela ranks fifth in the world in university enrolment. The excellence of the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra System is recognized throughout the world. Venezuela won the greatest number of medals at the fourth Games of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas, currently being held in our country. As was recently seen in the Copa America, Venezuela has emerged as one of the outstanding soccer teams of our region.

We call on all nations to provide new generations with the tools necessary for all people living on the Earth to lead humanly rewarding lives and to live in harmony with each other and with nature.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Sefue (United Republic of Tanzania): I commend the able leadership of the President of the General Assembly and his Bureau, and I assure them of my delegation's continued full support and cooperation. Like others, I want to extend Tanzania's sympathy and condolences to the people of Norway and to join others in denouncing in the strongest terms possible such dastardly and heinous acts of terrorism and intolerance.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Tanzania supports the SADC proposal to create a dedicated United Nations entity for youth.

Proportionately, Africa has the youngest population of any continent. That is a huge resource for the good of Africa and of the world. If that resource is to bear fruit, however, we need to prepare young

people to be the responsible, accountable and democratic leaders of Governments and captains of business we want them to be. My Government believes that young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but that they can be the leaders of today and make an important contribution, side by side with their elders, to building their countries.

Through affirmative action, young people of both genders are represented in Tanzanian decision-making bodies, including Parliament. Tanzania has also formulated several policies, strategies and plans with clear goals and measurable targets to open up opportunities for young people. We continue to invest heavily in improving quality and expanding access to education and skills at all levels. With the support of the International Labour Organization, we are fighting the worst forms of child labour.

We are also focusing on the health and vitality of our youth, including by working to prevent teen pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other infectious and non-infectious diseases. We have established a youth development fund, and we encourage savings and credit societies and microcredit programmes to give young people access to concessional investment financing. We are promoting young people's employment in farming and non-farm rural service businesses to enable them to find a better life within their communities. We are participating in regional programmes that address all of these issues, and we thank the bilateral and multilateral partners who support our national and regional programmes. We count on their continued and enhanced support.

Globalization and the technology that drives it have put young people across the world in a global village and given them an acute consciousness of where they are and where they could be. Globalization builds and fuels aspirations — political, economic, cultural and social. Some of these are aspirations that many of our national Governments cannot meet on their own with their existing resources and policy space, or at the kind of speed that young people want.

Social media, on which our young people are hooked, are useful tools for positive change. Unfortunately, they can also produce negative outcomes. In other words, globalization gives our young people aspirations, but does not always give them the right tools, capacity or fair opportunities to realize their dreams. This can be destabilizing, and its effects will be felt beyond our borders. Let us all then support the efforts of national and regional Governments and create a fair globalization that unites the youth of the world not only inspirationally but materially as well.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mrs. Salman (Malaysia): Let me begin by joining other speakers to offer our condolences to the people of Norway for the horrendous attack that claimed the lives of more than 80 young people.

The Malaysian delegation wishes to express its gratitude to President Deiss for convening this meeting. It is very heartening to see so many young people gathered in this Hall today. Only through discussion and discourse can we truly understand the younger generation's hopes and aspirations in order to strengthen the economic, social and cultural relations between countries.

Forty-three per cent of the Malaysian population — some 12.5 million Malaysians — are young people aged between 15 and 40. Due to this large number, Malaysia has a Ministry dedicated to overseeing the well-being of its young people. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is tasked, among other things, with preparing the youth community to contribute to the nation's growth, development and prosperity and to further encourage it to create a successful nation. The Government of Malaysia has in place a full range of the support systems needed to enhance youth participation and empowerment at all levels.

In terms of policies, in 1985 Malaysia was one of the earliest States to formulate a national youth policy. That initiative was subsequently enhanced in 1997 and became the National Youth Development Policy. The Policy encompasses areas such as youth empowerment, human resource development, youth leadership and youth enterprise development. In addition, the Tenth Malaysia Plan, with its mission of working towards making Malaysia a progressive and high-income nation, recognizes youth participation as a critical component of the nation's growth. It therefore aims to create a generation of forward-looking young people who are motivated to pursue academic and career excellence.

In addition to the various policies it has in place, the Government continues to engage with the younger

generation through events. For example, in May, Putrajaya, the city that is home to the federal Government administrative centre, was turned into a sea of young people who came there in celebration of National Youth Day, honouring the country's young people. The celebrations included a youth convention, which discussed directions for achieving change for young people. Putrajaya has also been officially declared a youth-friendly city.

Furthermore, in affirmation of the importance of the work of the United Nations, in August 2010 Malaysia hosted the Second Global Model United Nations, in which more than 500 young representatives from across the globe participated, developing leadership as well as decision-making skills during simulated sessions of the General Assembly and other multilateral bodies of the United Nations system.

Malaysia takes great pride in the fact that it has given due recognition to youth development perspectives, both regionally and internationally. Nevertheless, Malaysia hopes that the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth (resolution 65/312) will be translated into concrete action so as to further the youth development agenda. Malaysia is also committed to enhancing and developing our community of young people as empowered entities and responsible citizens, in order to ensure that peace and prosperity remain not only a permanent feature of our nation but can also contribute to the betterment of our global village.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Srivali (Thailand): The Thai delegation shares with Norway a deep sense of outrage and sorrow at the massacre in Utøya. It is a painful reminder for us to redouble our efforts on behalf of young people everywhere and to create an environment where they are nurtured, empowered and given every opportunity to be all they can be.

The challenges facing Thailand's youth are broadly similar to those in many other developing countries. Our embrace of economic globalization has, within a few decades, transformed family structures, the distribution of wealth and access to opportunities. Economic development has brought greater material well-being and reduced poverty, but it has also brought wider income disparities, glaring gaps in opportunity, and the proliferation of unsustainable consumption and lifestyles. Thailand's young people are greatly affected by these changes. Unequal access to opportunities in education and employment means that we have young people who are highly capable and skilled, yet also vast numbers who are vulnerable and unprepared for the heightened economic competition under globalization.

To address these complex challenges, Thailand believes that a coordinated approach is of the utmost importance. Our Constitution and specific laws provide a legal framework that protects children and young people while promoting their development. At the political level, we have a National Committee for Youth and Child Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, on which youth representatives sit. In 2009, the Government launched a policy offering 15 years of free education. Meanwhile, urban/rural disparities are being addressed through greater decentralization of policy implementation, which means greater participation at the local level.

For the International Year of Youth, we have also been organizing activities to promote cross-cultural understanding among young people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds within the country. Thailand is also proud to send two youth delegates to participate in drafting and delivering our national statement under the social development agenda in the Third Committee at the commencement of every General Assembly session. Thai youth delegates have attended the Assembly for a number of years now, and we hope that more and more developing countries will be able to do the same in order to give a stronger voice to young people from developing countries in the arena of the General Assembly.

Such efforts, of course, are but a starting point. More can and must be done. We place much hope in the outcome document we have adopted (resolution 65/312), which we believe should serve to reinvigorate our common efforts for youth through its many thoughtful, solid and concrete proposals. We must take this declaration forward together, in a manner that will encourage the dreams of today's youth to take wing and lift humanity towards the brighter future it deserves.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines aligns

itself with the statements made by the representatives of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, respectively. We also align ourselves fully with the expressions of sympathy and solidarity with the people of Norway, in the wake of their recent horrific tragedy. Words cannot express the sorrow and outrage of the international community at this act of terrorism.

It is an unfortunate truth that youth and governance are oftentimes uneasy bedfellows. The traditional halls of power and politics — including this very General Assembly Hall — are often dominated by those for whom youth is but a dim memory. Our approaches to problem-solving — opaque, bureaucratic and frustratingly incremental — tend to be at odds with the typical passion, decisiveness and activism of youth. Furthermore, many of our political leaders have failed to earn the trust of young people, seeing them merely as an emotional wave to be ridden into or out of political office. Others seek to cynically grasp a mantle of "change" that belies their own status as senior citizens whose principles and transformative credentials have long since been sacrificed on the altar of political ambition.

But the world's youth need not be mistrusted, harnessed, indoctrinated or marginalized. They need to be listened to; they need to be embraced; and they need to be made active and leading partners in national development and global governance. The pace of change and development has accelerated exponentially, and the world that lies one generation into the future will be radically different from the one that we grapple with today. The pace of change — for good and ill — will be a defining feature of tomorrow's global village, and it is one that we have no experience in managing, or even predicting. It is today's youth who will inherit that world, and it is today's youth who must be taken into the confidence of leaders and policymakers on every step of our journey into the future.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates the central sentiment of the CARICOM Declaration on the Future of Youth in the Caribbean Community, namely, that young people are not problems to be solved, but, rather, invaluable assets and partners in development of our subregion. The creativity, innovation and energy that will chart a new course through the fallout of globalization and the ongoing economic crisis lies with our youth, and not with the orthodoxy that led us into the crises we now face.

In that regard, it is useful to recall a truism first attributed to former United States President Franklin Roosevelt: "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." As such, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has invested heavily in the youth at all levels of society. We have, in the past decade, achieved universal access to secondary education and are well under way to universal access to early childhood education. State spending on tertiary education has increased exponentially, and every single one of our students — with the cooperation of the Governments of Portugal and of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela — will soon have their own laptop computer, to engage the world beyond the narrow confines of our small island developing State.

Young people have also been thrust into positions of great responsibility at all levels of Government and public service. Senators, ministers, diplomats and other high-level officials are all part of this burgeoning youth brigade. Young Vincentian entrepreneurs, sportspersons and cultural artists continue to create jobs, influence debate and create new pathways for future development. Our national trust and faith in the youth is unshakeable.

The international community must tangibly demonstrate even greater levels of trust and faith in the youth. The challenges they face are often without parallel in historical memory. In our region, the youth confront transnational crime, HIV/AIDS, climate vulnerability and a technological explosion amid an uncertain economic environment, with changing modes of production and distribution of capital that have yet untold implications for the next generation.

This high-level event must have something to show for itself beyond a tepid outcome document. It must be the beginning of a re-imagining of the role of the youth in our national development and global governance, and the starting point of a genuine effort to mainstream youth issues and embrace our young people as equal partners in this journey into an uncertain future.

Anything less would be simply another attempt to use young people as a photogenic backdrop for further political grandstanding. But as we have learned in recent months, the price of such marginalization of young people and their needs and concerns can be

politically and societally cataclysmic. Let us heed the lessons that the youth have been trying to teach us.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Anderson (Ireland): I am honoured to address this High-level Meeting of the General Assembly. It has been particularly encouraging to see so many young people and their representatives in attendance and participating actively in this gathering.

I join with other participants in expressing our deep condolences to the Government and the people of Norway on the terrible loss of life in the tragic attacks of last Friday.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made by the Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union (EU), Mr. Pedro Serrano, on behalf of the member States of the EU.

At the outset, let me make three short points in relation to the World Programme of Action for Youth. First, Ireland values a human-rights-centred approach to the implementation of the Programme. The Programme itself recognizes that its successful implementation requires the full enjoyment by young people of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and a strong commitment by Member States to combat any violations of these rights. That approach and commitment must infuse all our efforts.

Secondly, gender equality is imperative in order to fully realize the aims of the Programme. In seeking to combat some of the challenges facing young women and girls — poverty, inequality, the combination of multiple forms of discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, especially in conflict, limited access to education or health care, including sexual and reproductive health care — we must focus on empowering young women and girls as agents of change.

Thirdly, we are acutely conscious of the developmental aspect. Almost 90 per cent of the world's 1.8 billion young people aged 15 to 24 live in developing countries. Recognizing and building on the vast potential of those young people is essential for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

Let me say a word about some recent developments in Ireland that may be of wider interest. The new Irish Government has demonstrated a strengthened focus on youth affairs with the creation of a full Cabinet position of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the corresponding establishment of a new Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

A commitment has been made to develop a youth policy framework to support children and young people in the 10-to-24-year age range. The overall aim of the framework is to clarify and enhance coherence, connectivity, coordination and delivery in youth services and related out-of-school-time services for young people in that age range. The intention is to enhance the development and participation of and support for young people; achieve greater coordination and coherence in the provision of youth services; and ensure that such provision is high-quality and outcomes-based.

The question of youth participation is particularly important. As the outcome document (resolution 65/312) adopted earlier this week recognizes, the participation of young people themselves in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating effective policies is critical to achieving the objectives of the World Programme of Action. The Irish Government is strongly committed to promoting the participation of children and young people in civil society, and the past decade has seen the establishment or consolidation of a range of structures to achieve that objective. These include local youth councils, a national youth parliament, student councils, a children's and young people's forum, a children and young people's participation support team, along with an inclusion programme and national consultations.

Within the wider effort to promote participation, we have placed particular emphasis on empowering marginalized young people. An inclusion programme, which was established in 2007, aims to provide new opportunities for seldom-heard young people to become involved in decision-making structures. The inclusion programme has been realized through the participation of a number of civil society organizations. These organizations work with gay and lesbian young people, young travellers, young people living in care, young people living with disabilities and young people from disadvantaged communities. As we move forward, the intention is to capture the lessons learned from the inclusion programme to ensure that an increasing number of young people who may be at risk of marginalization can take part in decision-making structures and process.

Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe. In difficult times as well as in good times, our young people remain our greatest resource. We want to offer them — all of them — greater opportunities to help craft the future of our country. It is our hope that this International Year of Youth will have helped towards making such opportunities available to young people worldwide.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago joins with previous speakers in extending condolences to the Government and people of Norway following the dastardly acts which resulted in the loss of life of many young people who represented the very flower of that nation's future.

Further, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to align itself with the statements made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community. In addition, we wish to make a brief statement in our national capacity.

In recognition of the importance of young people to community and national development, Trinidad and Tobago has developed a national youth policy that reflects a flexible and dynamic social development process between the Government and civil society and from which various national programmes and activities materialize. These relate in part to education, health, gender equality, addressing youth crime and violence, including drug-related crime, youth unemployment and youth leadership development.

The national youth policy promotes youth empowerment and participation, placing young people at the forefront of policy development and implementation. At the same time, it recognizes the Government's responsibility for creating the necessary facilitative framework to ensure that young people can make informed choices, lead meaningful, productive, enjoyable lives, and contribute to the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Further, it is noteworthy that the portfolio for youth-related affairs is now under the purview of the newly created Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

In commemoration of this International Year of Youth with the theme "Dialogue and mutual understanding", and based on the approach adopted by the United Nations system, Trinidad and Tobago has developed a number of initiatives that fall under the three main areas identified by the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. In this regard, one significant initiative was the launch of the National Youth Consultation Programme, in which young people were provided with opportunities to be included in decision-making processes through participation in consultations with Government ministers.

It is imperative to promote dialogue between Governments and young people, to foster mutual understanding and to better address the issues affecting them, as young people are key partners in the development and advancement of our societies. In this connection, I quote the Chinese proverb which states "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand".

In keeping with this approach, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has therefore increased youth participation and partnerships within communities by developing their capacities to dialogue with their peers and relevant stakeholders. The Government has also facilitated youth development through national leadership training programmes, peer education workshops and community social projects that harness discussions with young people in relation to the design and implementation of programmes to meet their needs. In this context, we encourage Member States to promote dialogue with young people in their own countries so that they become and remain involved in decisions that ultimately affect their future.

Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms the World Programme of Action for Youth and continues its implementation while we recognize the need to further develop and improve the current international framework on young people to effectively address the new challenges they face.

The time has come to move beyond dialogue to implementation and resource mobilization in order to empower young people and further the development of our societies as a whole. In closing, I wish to join my colleague from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in quoting Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who said "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future".

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): Grenada associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Through you, Sir, and on behalf of my Government and the people of Grenada, especially the youth, the delegation of Grenada expresses deep and heartfelt sympathy with the Government and people of Norway on the inexplicable killing of the young and not-so-young. The attack on Government buildings and young people strikes at the very heart of understanding, and we mourn the loss of life.

Equally, Grenada expresses solidarity with all the young people and families worldwide who are set upon by wars, famine and bombings. Most especially, we mourn the hundreds now dying every day in the Horn of Africa from famine. We support the United Nations call for global emergency relief and for longer-term sustainable development for those communities.

Grenada welcomes this High-level Meeting on Youth and extends congratulations to all the young people of the world. This conference is an opportunity for the international community to re-examine and scale up its efforts to respond to the many needs of young people. In this regard, we welcome the outcome document (resolution 65/312) and we look to its full and effective implementation and to the involvement of all young people in doing so.

Like in most countries, the young people of Grenada hold great promise. That promise, however, is weighed down by social and economic forces that lead to high rates of unemployment and other challenges. Yet, we continue to witness the emergence of a strong and positive national youth sector that is underpinned by a national youth policy.

Our young people, especially our girls, are graduating from secondary school in record numbers and going on to succeed in colleges and universities in equally record numbers. From primary to secondary level, our young athletes are breaking sports records and some, including our competitors in men's 400 metres and in women figure's skating, are setting their eyes on Olympic competitions. Watch out, Jamaica! Watch out for Kirani James!

Many more Grenadian youths are in professional schools and in the cultural sector and are becoming successful entrepreneurs. The number of young leaders, youth parliamentarians and youth ambassadors is growing, and there is a healthy and exhilarating dynamism that they spread as they succeed. Government spending focuses on youth training and job creation, rehabilitation and empowerment.

Far too many young people cannot achieve their potential due to poverty and lack of opportunity. As the United Nations prepares to commit to sustainable development in the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development process, Grenada reiterates its vision of our young people, who will play a stronger role in national sustainable development. That is why we call on the United Nations and others, including businesses, to engage in partnerships with us and to support us in the inclusion of youth within the democratic process, job creation and economic empowerment and in the development of the necessary frameworks to strengthen grass-roots youth organizations.

In closing, Grenada understands that young people are valuable to national development, but that they are far more than a national development resource. Rather, like other groups, young people have an intrinsic value to themselves and to humanity. It is our responsibility to do much more to honour and to empower them so that they, too, can make the right choices for themselves and for the world.

Grenada extends its best wishes for success to all youth delegates, and wishes them a safe journey back to their loved ones.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria.

Mr. Raytchev (Bulgaria): At the outset, let me join all previous speakers and express, on behalf of my country, our deepest sympathy for the people and Government of Norway following the horrendous and tragic attacks of Friday that claimed the lives of so many young people.

I feel honoured to speak before this High-level Meeting on a topic that is of particular relevance nowadays — how to improve conditions for the world's youth and help young people address their aspirations to participate in processes that shape their lives and their future. The importance that we attach to

such issues comes from the realization that youth is the natural driving force behind important changes in global development. Recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa once again point to the key role of young people as agents of social change, progress and development. They have also reaffirmed the vital role of new technologies and social media in empowering the voice of young people and their participation in shaping public opinion and the political decision-making process.

We are satisfied that the outcome document adopted earlier in the meeting (resolution 65/312) reconfirms the World Programme of Action for Youth as a major political instrument for comprehensive action on youth issues. It is of paramount importance to focus our efforts on its thorough and improved implementation at all levels, including by strengthening national capacities and democratic mechanisms for dialogue and partnerships with young people and youth-led organizations in decision-making processes affecting youth. Cooperation among national Governments, youth organizations and other stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels is a critical element of strategies and policies to achieve social integration, employment and poverty eradication.

Bulgaria fully supports the statement made by the observer of the European Union (EU) earlier in this debate, outlining the programmes and activities on youth in Europe. I wish to focus briefly on our national experience and efforts to address youth issues in the context of the EU cooperative action.

The National Youth Strategy 2010-2011, adopted by the Bulgarian Government in 2009, primarily focuses on employment and sustainable development, including the promotion of economic activity and career opportunities for young people. The target group of the Strategy is young people between 15 and 29 years of age. Concrete actions for its implementation are aimed at improving the quality of high-school and university education, promoting lifelong learning, providing more internships and strengthening the relationship between education and business. Support is envisaged for companies providing jobs to young people, especially in small towns and rural areas. Students' participation in scientific projects and high-tech innovations are also encouraged and supported.

Bulgarian young people are actively involved in projects under the EU programme Youth in Action, which is related to implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In promoting knowledge and understanding of democratic citizenship and the rule of law, such projects are conducive to making young people receptive to human rights standards and values, addressing in particular certain negative societal views, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Under the National Youth Strategy, volunteering is encouraged as one avenue to enhance youth potential and skills in different professional and scientific areas. In the context of the European Year of Volunteering, the fourth National Youth Meeting, which took place in Varna from 30 June to 4 July, discussed the advantages of volunteering for both young people and recipient institutions and businesses, with the active participation of civil society.

Last but not least, let me also highlight our participation in international cooperation and United Nations youth-related initiatives. In that particular field, the role of the United Nations remains indispensable. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria closely cooperates with the United Nations Association in Bulgaria to ensure the coordination of activities promoting youth participation at the United Nations. The joint plan of action between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Association, signed at the beginning of this year, provides for developing initiatives that foster the more active involvement of young people in United Nations activities, including areas such as the Millennium Development Goals, peace, human rights and sustainable development.

Part of that partnership is the arrangements for the selection and participation of youth representatives in the youth delegate programme. The national selection process, which is currently being conducted for the sixth consecutive year, aims at ensuring that the most proactive and knowledgeable students are given the opportunity to represent Bulgarian youth and to work alongside diplomats and other youth delegates from all over the world. We are proud that over the decades, Bulgaria has demonstrated its commitment to youth matters and that it is one of the countries with the longest-standing experience in providing a platform for the Bulgarian youth perspective to be voiced in the United Nations context.

In conclusion, let me express our confidence in the successful conclusion of this important conference. We are determined to contribute actively to ensuring a better future for the youth worldwide.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mrs. Espósito Guevara (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like first of all to extend our most heartfelt condolences to the brother people of Norway on their recent tragedy, whose main victims were young people.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia endorses the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Young people are a driving force of change in any society. It is they who, with their energy and rebellious spirit, show us the path to follow. Nevertheless, many of them look to the future with fear, since they have done all that society expects of them and yet cannot find work. From that position of insecurity, they have explained to us that what is needed now is profound change. We cannot continue down that path. The power of change is moving through world and young people are its driving force.

In Bolivia, young people have also made their vital contribution. In the past decade, young people of all social strata have occupied squares and streets, defending the natural resources of my country and the rights to a wage and to life, water, gas, health care, employment and, above all, the future. They fight against the plunder and demands of the Bretton Woods institutions and multinational companies.

The economic and financial crisis, the energy and food crisis, the water crisis, climate change, wars and invasions have hit young people hard. These are structural problems that we need to resolve so that present and future generations can live in peace and security. Climate change, lack of jobs and wars have forced young people to migrate to other regions and countries. In this search, they have faced racism, discrimination and violence. As migrants, they endure the rigours of their illegal status, abuse and racial hatred. They also face similar barriers in access to university education. These are some of the challenges youth is facing today.

The Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia has developed policies for our youth. Bolivia is the third country in Latin America to be illiteracy free, and is envisaging a post-literacy programme with the support of our sister Republics of Cuba and Venezuela. With the financial resources from gas income, we have established three indigenous universities to promote access to higher education for indigenous youth, and we have supported various types of sport under the slogan "High-altitude sports".

"My First Decent Job" is another programme focused on the young population, aimed at increasing the inclusion in the workforce of young, low-income graduates. We have also implemented credit and microcredit programmes to help young people undertake productive projects related to housing and workforce entry. Today, women also have access to land through a land distribution and redistribution programme. We also have special programmes for open housing options aimed at providing comprehensive care to young workers who have no protection and are socially disadvantaged. The Bolivian Volunteering Act monitors the rights and responsibilities of young volunteers.

Young people are the present and the future, and are thus the protagonists of change. We hope that the outcome document of this High-level Meeting on youth, dialogue and mutual understanding (resolution 65/312) will promote the participation of young people in making decisions about the future and in particular in building other means of development that are in harmony with nature, as an alternative to globalization, which has excluded young people, especially in the poorest countries.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Gregg (Liechtenstein): It is a great honour to be able to speak to the Assembly as a youth representative of Liechtenstein.

I extend my country's deepest sympathies to those affected by the horrific loss of lives in Norway. Let this meeting result in a renewed commitment to striving day to day, in solidarity, against such expressions of hate.

I have had the luck of growing up in a free and prosperous part of the world. But already as a small kid, seeing images of war, famine and environmental catastrophe, I realized that most children and youth in the world were less lucky. Over the years, these images

helped me develop a sense of responsibility and an understanding of interconnectedness that led to transformative action, first within my own home and at school and now as I strive towards my ideals day to day. I believe that young people have an innate sense of justice, and with the right kind of education, we develop a desire to act on it. Our sense of responsibility and energy to act are the world's greatest untapped assets.

Participation is not just an option, but a demand expressed by youth. In Norway, the young survivors of the massacre pledged to stay engaged in order to demonstrate that violence against opinion is ineffective. Arab youths have also reminded the world of the incredible power of peaceful protest. This should be a sobering thought for leaders who continue to deny young people their inalienable human rights and an opportunity to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Not only do we increasingly possess a global consciousness, but we have the dexterity, ingenuity, courage and sense of urgency to use tools for mass mobilization to spread our voices. A free and open Internet is essential to this end.

The youths of Tunisia, who within six months have brought about jaw-dropping changes, serve as an inspiration and guidance to their peers in many other countries. The litmus test of real transformation will be the level of participation of women and young people in leadership positions and in decision-making processes.

We must apply the lessons learned from revolutions in the Arab region to other situations of injustice as well. Why not organize large-scale demonstrations for other pressing issues or turn our fight against climate change into a global news event? Learning about our human rights gives us the clarity and focus to act. This is why human rights education and learning are so important. Human rights education allows us to view our own rights and our community's rights in dialogue with others locally, regionally and globally, resulting in a common language of humanity. The exhilarating solidarity we feel with the youth activists in the Arab world is based on a renewed understanding of the universality of human rights and has turned years of limited mutual understanding on their head. A society of peace starts with a basic human rights education.

As the global population hits 7 billion, it is not only a human right but also a demographic imperative to deliver sexual and reproductive health education and family planning. It is unacceptable that a 15 year-old girl living in South Sudan has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than of completing school. Human rights are indivisible and include sexual and reproductive rights. Young women and men must not let their bodies be subjugated by those in power. Well-informed reproductive decisions can have profound positive effects on the sustainable development of a country.

Using children and young people as instruments of war is among the most heinous violations of the laws of armed conflict. Liechtenstein reiterates its full support for the work for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We also believe that fighting impunity is a prerequisite for long-term peace. The International Criminal Court plays an important role in this regard, as demonstrated by its first trial ever — that of Thomas Lubanga, charged with forcibly recruiting boys and girls to fight with his militia.

Liechtenstein further deplores attacks on schools and hospitals and threats against students and teachers, and we commend the Security Council for taking concrete action on this important issue.

On 25 May 2010, the United Nations launched a two-year campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that increases the age for direct participation in hostilities to 18. To support the campaign and to raise awareness about the plight of children affected by armed conflict, Liechtenstein has teamed up with a record label to produce a CD called "Right to Play". The proceeds from the sale go to Play31, a non-governmental organization that organizes football games among former child soldiers to assist in the process of reconciliation. Children affected by armed conflicts around the world are being deprived of this right. Let us give it back to them before it is too late.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to address this international forum to discuss the interests of youth in a desire for joint dialogue and mutual understanding. We welcome the statements that have been made on behalf of the Group

of 77 and China, the Group of African States and the Arab Group.

At the outset, I would also like to express our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of the heinous terrorist attack committed by an extremist in Oslo and Utøya Island, Norway. We condemn all forms of terrorism. This incident reaffirms that terrorism does not originate from a certain country or religion.

The Government of the Sudan gives high priority to youth issues. It has launched many projects to address youth unemployment, encourage youth investment through microfinance, AND develop vital sectors such as agriculture. We have also offered many opportunities in university and post-graduate education, and have seen a large increase in enrolment in recent years.

The Sudanese Government also takes an interest in many other youth programmes to support cultural and social activities and participation in sports and political life, and to combat unemployment by offering work opportunities. We also work to combat drug use and to raise awareness of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. We support marriage and family stability, and work to rehabilitate young people affected by wars, armed conflict and environmental degradation, as well as those with disabilities and special needs. We are proud of our success in those programmes and are willing to share our experiences.

The many and extreme challenges that young people face, especially in Africa and the developing world in general, are preventing their full participation in society. The problem is exacerbated by the effects of the global financial and economic crisis and the drought on the African continent. In that regard, we note that we need more international cooperation to support training and education in all fields, including the exchange of scientific knowledge.

The Sudan, understanding the importance of African efforts, recently inaugurated the headquarters of the African Youth Union in Khartoum, housing its general assembly. As another indicator of our interest in youth, we have the honour to host the headquarters of the Arab-African Youth Council, further confirming the Sudan as a meeting place for Arab and African youth. We also stress the need to work diligently to achieve the Millennium Development Goals to the benefit of young people. We have also worked to increase access for youth to information and communication technology through educational grants and training.

In conclusion, we hope that this important meeting will promote the interests of youth in many sectors, and in particular that it will help youth in States affected by armed conflict or that suffer under foreign occupation.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Ms. Ivanović (Serbia): At the outset, I would like to express, on behalf of my Government and the people of Serbia, deepest condolences to the Government and people of Norway and our sympathies to the families of the victims of the horrifying terrorist attack that happened last Friday.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union two days ago. I shall therefore address some of the priority issues regarding youth from our national standpoint.

We have witnessed many changes, positive and negative, that shape the world in which we live today. To make the most of the possibilities presented to us and to diminish risks in the future, we must include young people in all walks of social life in a consistent and coherent way. To make sure that we have leaders for tomorrow, we must create them today.

Recognizing the importance of its youth, Serbia established the Ministry of Youth and Sport in 2007 and devised a national youth strategy the following year, after a series of 167 round tables at which, alongside the representatives of many relevant institutions, the young people of Serbia were given an opportunity to contribute their ideas to the drafting of that important document.

Calling on young people to take a proactive attitude in life is one of the priorities of Serbia's national youth strategy. To increase their ever greater social participation, the Ministry of Youth and Sport initiated and encouraged the establishment of local offices for youth. In 2007, they numbered five; today there are 123 of them all over Serbia. As a matter of fact, two thirds of all local Government agencies have been instrumental in establishing those offices, true to the fact that the needs of youth must be addressed first and foremost in the communities in which they live, that is, at the local level. Over 100 municipalities have

adopted local action plans for their young people and provided funds to finance programmes and projects designed to address the needs of their youth.

On 5 July, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Law on Youth. In this way, it made good on the promise made to Serbia's youth that it would be given, during the International Year of Youth, a law providing, inter alia, for the establishment of a Government Council in which youth representatives would account for at least one third of its members. Since the very beginning of the process, young people were included in consultations leading to the drafting and adoption of the law, reflecting the time-honoured truth that those who are supposed to benefit from legislation to be adopted should be the first to be asked what their expectations from the legislation are.

Ever since its establishment, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has fostered partnership relations with the civil sector. Such relations facilitate the inclusion of the young in the implementation of various projects of the national youth strategy. The Ministry supported and bankrolled over 500 projects submitted by associations of and for young people, aimed at, among other things, promoting healthy lifestyles and tolerance, preventing drug and alcohol addiction, improving the environment, social inclusiveness and voluntary activities, and addressing all topics that are important to young people. The Ministry extended financial support to various informal-education seminars and training courses on project elaboration, career skills and youth entrepreneurship, in order to help young people to find employment or start their own businesses.

The Ministry also helped build 280 outdoor and 47 indoor sports arenas all over Serbia. Better conditions were thus created for young people to engage in sport and recreational activities more actively and to spend quality leisure time. After all, those were the needs identified as those of young people themselves in many polls taken beforehand.

On 12 August, my country will mark the completion of the International Year of Youth and Youth Day by launching 134 voluntary youth activities selected in competitions in 25 districts of Serbia. We have been guided by the desire to support our youth in the year in which we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers and the European Year of Volunteering in order to demonstrate, through voluntary engagement, the power of young people to bring about change in local communities.

Serbia sets great store by its youth. Investment in young people is investment in the country's future. Since 2008, the Young Talents Fund of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, headed by the Minister for Youth and Sport, has granted scholarships and various awards to over 6,000 talented high-school students, winners of national and international competitions in the fields of science, the arts and sports, university seniors and Serbian students studying abroad. The recipients pledged to work in Serbia upon completion of their studies, which is one of the measures to forestall the brain-drain that affects many countries around the world.

No speedy and sustainable development is possible without investment in human resources and without making sure that those resources remain in the country of their origin. Funds like the Young Talent Fund can help keep the young educated people in developing countries, thus enabling them to stay and prosper at home.

The challenges facing the young call for concerted common efforts at all levels of Government — local, provincial and national. It is necessary to work in partnership with international organizations and United Nations agencies and to enlist non-governmental organizations and the business sector in designing youth policies. There is plenty of room for improving youth cooperation in order to arrive — through the exchange of ideas and experiences at the national and international levels — at the most effective institutional models that will facilitate the development that we all need.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Faqiri (Afghanistan): On behalf of the Afghan Government, I would like to stress the need for further efforts to be made to support young people in developing their capacity to tackle the challenges they face.

Let me emphasize that the primary responsibility for ensuring that youth development lies with States. Today, I will address both the challenges ahead for Afghan youth and achievements accomplished thus far.

Afghanistan is a country of youth. Sixty-eight per cent of the population is under 25 years of age. The bulk of the population is to a certain extent deprived of their fundamental rights, including but not limited to lack of educational and employment opportunities. The situation of girls is of particular concern. Youth literacy rates are low — 50 per cent for boys and 18 per cent for girls. Secondary school enrolments for boys and girls are 23 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, and less than 2 per cent of the Afghan population reaches higher education.

Faced with these challenges, Afghan youths are at risk. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by unemployment, low wages, lack of safety and security, poverty and lack of medical care, making youth particularly at risk to recruitment by armed opposition and terrorist organizations.

In the face of these challenges, we should not lose sight of the progress made so far. Currently, more than 7 million boys and girls are enrolled in schools, investing in their futures. We have constructed more than 4,000 schools across the country. We predict that we will have 9 million children enrolled in schools by 2020, and over 40 per cent of new students will be girls. Additionally, the great majority of Afghanistan's population has access to basic health care, showing that great progress has been made over the past 10 years.

I seize this opportunity to thank the international community for the continued support we have received to achieve these objectives. It is worth mentioning that a considerable percentage of the Afghan Parliament is comprised of members of the young generation. News agencies, television broadcasters, monthly magazines are run by the youth generation.

The Government of Afghanistan is committed to fulfilling its responsibility to protect the rights of youth. We have initiated a number of strong steps at the national, regional and international levels, which include the launch of a national youth programme that reiterates our commitment to the development of the sons and daughters of Afghanistan and seeks to establish an opportunity for Afghan youths to fulfil their aspirations.

Today's generation of youth in my country, having experienced conflict and exile, must now be empowered with alternative opportunities. Their fresh perspectives, energy, enthusiasm and determination must be channelled to promote peace and development in the country.

I wish to conclude by joining previous speakers in expressing the condolences of the Afghan Government and the Afghan people to the Mission of Norway and, through it, to the people of Norway on the recent act of terror that caused dozens of casualties.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): Last year, the General Assembly, in declaring the present International Year of Youth, insightfully drew attention to two important elements for the advancement of peace, namely, dialogue and mutual understanding. This theme has been an invitation to listen to the aspirations and interests of young people, to engage in a mutual exchange with them, and to translate these exchanges into a real sharing of wisdom for the common good.

Each and every child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment. The family is where young people first learn moral responsibility and respect for others. The family has an important role to play in educating children to develop all their faculties and in training them to acquire ethical and spiritual values and to be deeply attached to peace, liberty and the dignity of all men and women. The family, founded on the marriage between one man and one woman, is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and must be guaranteed protection by society and the State.

Parents — mother and father together — have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children. Parents cannot withdraw from this essential role. States are called, in conformity with international instruments, to respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents in this regard. Youth policies, programmes, action plans and commitments approved by Member States must respect fully the role of parents regarding their children's well-being and education, including in the area of human sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, which should not include abortion.

Many people in the world today do not have stable points of reference on which to build their lives, and so they end up being deeply insecure. There is a

growing mentality of relativism and liberalism that holds that everything is equally valid, and that truth, absolute points of reference and moral standards do not exist. Such a way of thinking leads not to authentic freedom, but rather to instability, confusion and blind conformity to the fads of the moment with which certain cultures around the world tempt our youth. Young people are entitled to receive from previous generations solid points of reference to help them make choices on which to build their lives.

Member States and this Organization can make positive contributions in this regard and so must be willing to recommit continually to upholding and implementing the principles enshrined in the Charter and the internationally agreed fundamental human rights instruments. The more they are able to do this, the more our young people will be able to help advance the cause of peace and build societies based on respect for spiritual and ethical values and directed to the common good of all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, allow me to convey our sincerest condolences to the friendly people and Government of Norway. The Palestinian people and their leadership were shocked to learn of last Friday's atrocious bombing of a Government complex in Oslo and the shootings on the island of Utøya which left nearly 80 innocent people dead, including scores of young people. We are confident that Norway will fully recover from this painful tragedy and emerge even stronger.

Palestine aligns itself with the statement delivered by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As today's world grows more volatile for youth, they continue to unnecessarily suffer grave hardships and to face an unprecedented number of obstacles. This has affected their realization of peace, prosperity, freedom and the right to education. Regrettably, Palestinian youth face the greatest obstacle to any semblance of normal life: the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel's blatant disregard of and disrespect for international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

For more than four decades, crimes have continued to be committed against Palestinian youth, with total disregard for human life and with complete impunity, which has allowed for such crimes to continue at the expense of our youth. Israel's refusal to uphold the basic principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions has resulted in a complete deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This has only prolonged the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the suffering of the Palestinian people, in particular the millions of Palestine refugees who have been living in refugee camps for 63 years, yearning for the realization of their right of return.

Despite all of the obstacles that face the Palestinian people living under occupation, Palestinian youth continue to reach for their goals and dreams. Among them are young refugees who every day overcome the difficulties they face and reach as high as they can to let their voices be heard and their talents seen. Just last week, for the third time, youth in Gaza, including some with disabilities, broke the Guinness World Record for the largest handprint painting in the world. Also, in another remarkable story, three young Palestinian women from a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), with the help of their teacher, invented a walking cane for the blind and deaf, which gave them the opportunity and the pleasure of meeting with the Secretary-General last summer here in New York.

These are only the most recent of the achievements, which are proof that, if given a chance, the youth of Palestine can rise up and be leaders in the region and the world. Moreover, just moments ago on this very day, the youth of Gaza broke the Guinness World Record for flying the most kites at the same time, setting a fourth Guinness World Record. Once again, we place on record our deepest gratitude for the tireless efforts of UNRWA for its assistance to the 4.5 million Palestine refugees, especially the youth, because the education and training it provides has equipped our youth with the tools they need to make a name for themselves and accomplish such lofty goals.

Although the Palestinian people, including youth, have made significant strides to overcome the grave hardships of living under occupation, they will never be able to achieve their full potential so long as Israel continues to occupy their land and impede their right to

self-determination. Here, we call on the international community to make all necessary efforts and muster the political will to address the obstacles and challenges faced by Palestinian youth living in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Indisputably, the 44-year occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has severely hampered development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals, making it nearly impossible to fully attain them. But over and above worries about achieving the MDGs, youth living in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, have on far too many occasions been deliberately targeted, shot and killed and even been used as human shields by the Israeli occupying forces. Palestinian youth who exercise their right to freedom of expression against the Wall and illegal settlements every week are met with the bullets and aggression of the occupying Power. Our youth also continue to be the victims of Israeli settler terror attacks — shot, beaten and threatened while walking to school or playing outside their homes.

The Israeli aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip in 2008-2009 tragically highlighted the utter disregard for Palestinian youth. Hundreds of them were killed, and scores of what were supposed to be safe havens, such as hospitals and schools, were shelled, bombed and destroyed with impunity. We call on the international community, including all United Nations organs, to address these grave violations, without selectivity, in order to bring an end once and for all to all attacks by the occupying Power against Palestinian youth at civilian infrastructures meant to protect them.

The Israeli occupation, which began in 1967, must come to an end now along with all of the occupying Power's crimes against the Palestinian people, including youth. Each and every day of Israel's occupation results in a deterioration of the socio-economic conditions and the overall well-being of youth, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip, where the four-year immoral and illegal siege continues to strip young people there of all their basic human rights, including the right to food. The blockade has afflicted thousands with hunger, malnutrition, anaemia, stunted growth and many other preventable diseases.

There is no time to be wasted. We thus renew our appeal to the international community to uphold its responsibilities and to take immediate, decisive action to bring Israel, the occupying Power, into compliance with international law, including its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The youth of Palestine will be able to live to their fullest potential only if they can live in peace, freedom and dignity in an independent State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The time is now ripe to make this a reality.

Peace may be necessary for leaders, but peace is indispensable for our youth.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4, of 16 October 1992, I now give the floor to the representative of the Observer of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Wade (International Organization for Migration): Before I begin, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) would like to express its sincere condolences to the people of Norway in the wake of this awful tragedy. Our thoughts are with them.

The International Organization for Migration is honoured to participate in this dialogue along with such an impressive group of experts and young people.

This High-level Meeting comes at an important time to reflect upon the wave of democratization sweeping through the Arab world and the role youth have played in a fundamental shift in the terms of political debate. The panel discussions held over the past two days have provided enormous insight into the challenges they face and into what can be achieved through dialogue and mutual understanding. The International Organization for Migration believes more than ever that the United Nations and its partners are listening. Quite simply, there is no alternative. In most of the world today, youth not only represent the future; they are also the majority of the population. Addressing the challenges and opportunities of our time will depend upon their energy and creativity.

A recurring theme throughout this dialogue has been a sense of frustration among young people in societies where the voices and needs of youth are ignored and where hopes of meaningful employment,

development and political participation are stifled. For example, in one county with one of the world's fastest growing youth populations, only one or two of every 30 graduates has a prospect of employment, and those that do find employment could expect to be paid 15 times as much if they migrated to the developed world.

Migration is the most fundamental step that a young person can take to escape poverty, and young people today are taking it in enormous numbers. In the past quarter-century, the number of international migrants has doubled to 214 million, half of whom are under the age of 29. Many of these young people, travelling with their dreams and those of their loved ones, face enormous challenges. The perilous journeys of crowded boats from North Africa tell of an enormous human cost. Not only are these young people negotiating the borders of a new country, region and culture, but they are often also taking the first steps into adulthood.

At the same time, global youth migration presents enormous opportunities, both for the young people themselves and for global prosperity. In a world where many of the developed countries are facing population aging and decline and the developing world is growing and getting younger, youth migration has huge potential to increase economic growth and reduce unemployment. According to the World Bank, if rich countries were to admit enough migrants from poor countries to expand their labour forces by a mere 3 per cent, the world would be richer by $356 billion a year.

In its role as the principal intergovernmental organization for global migration, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. We must recognize that some of the greatest challenges faced by migrants are not physical, but social barriers of xenophobia, social marginalization and discrimination.

The PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival, a joint initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and IOM, recognizes young people as powerful agents of social change in a world often characterized by conflict and division. The Festival encourages young people to explore issues of migration, diversity and social inclusion and to share their voices and creative vision with a global audience. Since it was launched in 2009, over 400 videos from 75 countries have been received, and through our network of over 50 partner organizations, winning videos have been screened in dozens of festivals, cinemas and broadcasts on television networks throughout the world. We hope that some members had a chance to see these remarkable videos on Monday at the PLURAL+ side event. The insight and creativity with which young people speak to issues such as human trafficking, social marginalization and racism reflect the energy that youth brings to addressing social problems in today's world.

Rarely, if ever, has the aspiration for democracy been more powerfully demonstrated than during the youth-led movements of the Arab Spring. It is now the responsibility of the international community to engage with young people and translate this energy into reforms that promote social integration, security, employment and the eradication of poverty. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues at this important meeting and, after engaging with key experts and young people, feel confident that together we can face the challenges and grasp the opportunities ahead.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 31/3 of 18 October 1976, I now call on the observer of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Ms. McMillan (Commonwealth Secretariat): The Commonwealth Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to extend its condolences to the people of Norway.

The Commonwealth recognizes that the success of the Commonwealth and the global youth agenda are reliant on the commitment of young people throughout the world, and we salute them for their active contributions in promoting development, peace and democracy through such values as tolerance, understanding and respect — values that are dear to the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth acknowledges the recommendations expressed in the outcome document of this meeting (resolution 65/312) and believes that it is the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the recommendations that will make the International Year of Youth a lasting success.

The Commonwealth, through its Commonwealth Youth Programme, stands ready to unite and to work with the United Nations agencies, youth organizations and stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations of

the outcome document and the World Programme of Action for Youth are fulfilled.

It is the position of the Commonwealth Secretariat that the time is now for greater action and greater partnerships for youth development. The Commonwealth Secretariat believes that the time is right to work for greater economic empowerment, where banks and other segments of the private sector can also help young people gain access to credit by promoting enterprise and supporting youth development planning. The Commonwealth purports that it is time for greater political empowerment of young people, where Governments and stakeholders, including youth leaders, ought to do more to bring young people into local and national decision-making processes, creating greater political spaces where young people can play a role.

Young people are issuing a clarion call for meaningful change in the professionalizing of youth work and meaningful change in measuring, monitoring and evaluating the progress in youth development.

At the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 2009, stand-alone declarations were made under the them "Investing in young people". The Heads further signalled their commitment to young people by opening their meeting and holding frank and meaningful dialogue with them. This exchange of ideas on youth development has become a feature of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments' meeting since 2007, when it was held in Kampala, and could be a practice that other high-level meetings could adopt to make youth development more meaningful for young people.

This year, the International Year of Youth, the Commonwealth has listened to its youth, Governments and stakeholders at a number of consultations under the theme "Investing in youth". Among the events was the Commonwealth Youth Leaders' Conference, held in India in December 2010, at which young people from the 54 member States encouraged their leaders and decision-makers to establish meaningful change through youth mainstreaming, greater investments and participation in youth development, the raising of the profile and resources of youth ministries and agencies, and the establishment, expansion and strengthening of national youth councils within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government, through the Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007-2015, identified 13 priority actions for youth empowerment, addressing the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth. The Commonwealth will redouble its efforts to ensure that youth empowerment is kept in focus, thus achieving the targets that have been set.

The Commonwealth looks forward to the upcoming Commonwealth Youth Forum, alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, in Perth, Australia, in October, with a view to working with youth after the International Year of Youth — a time for implementing the Commonwealth's youth agenda.

Let this Assembly commit to the belief that truly there is nothing about youth without youth and that youth is at the centre of development.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this agenda item. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 27.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations A/65/PV.116

General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

116th plenary meeting
Thursday, 28 July 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft decision (A/65/L.88)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on agenda item 115 jointly with agenda item 13, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", at the 40th and 41st plenary meetings on 29 October 2010, as well as jointly with agenda items 13 and 120, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", at the 52nd plenary meeting on 23 November 2010.

Members will also recall that, under agenda item 115, the Assembly held a specific meeting focused on development at its 97th and 98th plenary meetings on 14 June 2011.

Members will also recall that, under agenda items 13 and 115, the Assembly adopted resolutions 65/1, 65/7, 65/281 and 65/285 at its 9th, 41st, 100th and 105th plenary meetings, respectively. Also under agenda item 115, the Assembly adopted resolution 65/238 at its 73rd plenary meeting.

The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/65/L.88, entitled "Participation of civil society representatives in the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, to be convened on 19 and 20 September 2011".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/65/L.88?

Draft decision A/65/L.88 was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 27 (*continued*)

High-level Meeting on Youth

Social development

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Cheikh (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express the condolences of the President, Government and people of Mauritania to the Kingdom of Norway on the terrorist act that claimed dozens of innocent victims. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement of condolence in that regard two days ago.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the General Assembly and its President, our dear friend

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Mr. Joseph Deiss, who is guiding our work very wisely. I would like to express particular appreciation for resolution 65/267 of 15 March 2011, thanks to which we are here in New York to discuss issues related to young people, who are an important part of society and the cornerstone of all successful socio-economic development.

The Government of my country, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, at the instruction of its President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, has stated and reaffirmed that the future of any group lies in its youth. It set out a national five-year plan for youth, recreation and sports to be implemented from 2011 to 2015. Our youth policy makes young people a Government priority and will be funded to the tune of more than $230 million, of which $37 million will come from a State fund. That is in line with the election campaign of the President of the Government, who was voted into office two years ago.

Through its national policy on youth, sports and recreation, the Government of Mauritania is determined to combat poverty among young people, who constitute 40 per cent of the Mauritanian population. It intends to integrate them into development and to support youth initiatives in order to improve their situation, which is beset by unemployment and school drop-outs. We seek to build national youth networks that are to be renewed every three years. That is one of the policy goals of my Government. We have also signed and ratified all international youth-related agreements, demonstrating the importance that we accord them, in particular in terms of education, health care and unemployment.

With respect to education, despite the progress made in school enrolment, more remains to be done. We have set up a new Government department of higher education and scientific research, as well as public education institutions, in order to reform education in Mauritania.

Mauritania's young people face many challenges with regard to health care. However, those with special needs will find remedies available thanks to the political will and wide-ranging reforms on which the Ministry of Health has embarked.

With regard to unemployment, we have formed an important ministry tasked with youth employment and promoting the trade sector, which provides 25 per cent of employment opportunities, followed by agriculture at 20.4 per cent, in addition to other sectors, such as services and public administration.

Addressing youth issues involves many challenges and requires the assignment of roles in order to sustain youth development. That has been done by establishing central agencies. Despite our stated wish to look after young people by setting up a ministry for youth affairs and by encouraging them to use such services, many challenges remain.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/29 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for Partners in Population and Development.

Mr. Rao (Partners in Population and Development): I thank you very much, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to make a few comments on behalf of Partners in Population and Development (PPD) at this High-level Meeting on Youth.

At the outset, PPD would like to convey its heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Norway on their recent tragedy.

As an intergovernmental organization of 25 developing countries, PPD is committed to the promotion of South-South cooperation in the field of population and development by supporting, especially in its member countries, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The year 2011 will be remembered as the year when the world's population reached 7 billion. According to the latest projections of the United Nations, the world population will continue to increase to 9.3 billion by the year 2050. To put those numbers into perspective, the world population did not reach 1 billion until 1804. It then took 123 years to reach 2 billion in 1927, 33 years to reach 3 billion in 1960, 14 years to reach 4 billion in 1974, 13 years to reach 5 billion in 1987, and 12 years to reach 6 billion by October 1999. Another billion will be added by October 2011. That growth in world population is really phenomenal.

One crucial feature of the current global demographic situation with significant implications for the future is the fact that more than 3 billion people are under the age of 25, with close to 90 per cent of them

living in developing countries. This preponderance of young people, if and when combined with appropriate policies, can become a great source of growth, prosperity and social change in the world. How effectively we will help those cohorts of young people in meeting their educational, employment, developmental, political, health — including reproductive health — needs, as well as how rapidly we will help to empower them, will surely influence the future pace and nature of peace and development in the world.

While sincere efforts have been made by countries in the past to achieve the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action for Youth, millions of young people live in poverty and progress towards youth development has been very uneven across the countries of the world. The young are facing many challenges in society, including lack of access to quality education, meaningful employment, proper health care — including reproductive health care — and political participation. They also suffer from violence and setbacks due to climate change. Most severely affected among them are girls and young women, as well as the poor and the disadvantaged. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable because they are frequently prevented from completing their education and because of their risk of pregnancy, child birth-related complications, forced early marriage, HIV infection and abduction by human traffickers.

As the outcome document (resolution 65/312) makes clear, it is important to give priority attention to addressing those and other challenges that hinder youth development, especially through poverty alleviation and the promotion of sustained economic growth, sustainable development, full and productive employment, and the full participation of youth in the formulation and implementation of policies at all levels. Partners in Population and Development strongly believes that building national capacity to address youth development is most crucial and that the international community should make all efforts to support the less developed countries in that regard.

Based on its record of sharing experiences and innovative practices, as well as of promoting capacity-building through training, research and knowledge-sharing, PPD is convinced that South-South and triangular cooperation have a significant role to play in future national and international efforts aimed at youth development.

In closing, PPD would like to support the implementation of the outcome document by all concerned.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Gutiérrez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru has a youth population of 7.5 million, representing 28 per cent of the total population. The number of young people has increased in recent years, and today young people are the fastest growing sector of our population. Because of those statistical trends, over the past 10 years the Peruvian Government has developed institutional policies through its national youth secretariat in order to lay down general guidelines to facilitate the holistic development of young people and to ensure their inclusion in society and their active participation as citizens. Over the nine years of its existence, the youth secretariat has achieved some results that I would like to outline.

In 2006, we drew up the National Plan for Youth 2006-2011 in order to create synergy between the State and civil society, offer better and greater opportunities for young people, and establish cross-cutting institutional policies throughout the Government. That has had positive effects, improving the quality of life of many young people. Between 2004 and 2008, poverty among young people was reduced from 43.8 per cent to 31.6 per cent. Also, in the sphere of civic participation, more young people became involved in politics throughout the nation, and today there are 1,665 young people holding elected public office. Still, although the Government's agenda for social inclusion of the young has shown progress, much remains to be done to achieve inclusive development to benefit our young people.

Peru's national efforts have achieved sustained economic growth over the past decade that we are trying to transform into inclusive development, with immediate impact on our youngest citizens. That development should provide them with practical tools enabling them to play an active role in our country's productivity and political system, contributing to our economic growth and the democratic involvement of our citizens. In our view, inclusive development should be based on social investment policies focused on youth. However, such policies should be viewed not as

welfare for a particular group, but as a bonus of economic growth and a way to promote the comprehensive development of a sector of the population that will forge a more integrated and cohesive future for the country. Those policies are an integral part of our medium- and long-term strategies for sustainable and inclusive development.

Like Peru, many countries in Latin America have large youth populations. That demographic reality provides us with one of the best opportunities of recent years to take significant steps forward in sustainable development and in addressing the region's endemic problems of social inequity, provided that we commit to investing in our young people and their education. We are convinced that if we give our young generation access to quality education, a functioning health system and opportunities for productive and dignified work in a democratic system that fosters and guarantees citizen participation, the countries of our region will have the human, social and cultural capital necessary to support sustainable development, improve distribution and promote the creation of wealth.

To conclude, I wish to state that Peru will remain committed to national and international policies on young people, and to express the firm resolve of my country to pursue actions and programmes that allow young people to be fully and progressively involved in our society, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 27?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 162 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 162 at its 113th plenary meeting on 27 July 2011.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Pakistan appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament and the international disarmament machinery. It is an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis of the problems faced by the disarmament machinery as a whole, which should not be lost in the pursuit of negotiating a particular treaty. Pakistan's position on the Secretary-General's High-level Meeting held last year was circulated as a General Assembly document under the symbol A/65/378.

The challenges faced by the international disarmament agenda and the machinery go beyond the Conference on Disarmament. The components of the contemporary disarmament machinery created by the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I) are interlinked. The revitalization of those components, including the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission, should therefore be simultaneous and proceed in an integrated and holistic manner.

The purpose and overarching goal of creating the Conference on Disarmament, as mandated by SSOD I, was nuclear disarmament, which is an agenda item that has seen no progress for the past 32 years. Indeed, in 2008, the Secretary-General, in a seminal address articulating his action plan, accorded primacy to nuclear disarmament in his five-point proposal. The first step suggested by the Secretary-General called upon all States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. While recognizing the Conference on Disarmament as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Secretary-General suggested that the nuclear Powers actively engage with other States on the issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

The reason why the Secretary-General made that call is because the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to live up to its raison d'être — nuclear disarmament — for more than three decades. It is also a fact that the Conference on Disarmament failed to make any substantive progress for 15 years after concluding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban

Treaty (CTBT) negotiations. Yet, it is astounding that the present quest for revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament arises only from the developments of the past two years and is fixated on a single issue. Ironically, the vociferous condemnation of the present stalemate is championed by the countries that were either themselves responsible for decades of the Conference on Disarmament's inactivity or were notably silent.

In order to clearly assess the reasons underlying the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, it is important to acknowledge the following basic facts.

The Conference on Disarmament's work or inactivity is a reflection of prevailing political realities, as it does not operate in a vacuum. No treaty that is contrary to the security interests of any of its member States can be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. In fact, the rule of consensus was introduced into the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure to ensure that point. Hence, achieving progress in the Conference is possible only by meeting or addressing the security concerns of all its member States. The Conferences lack of progress cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure, since landmark instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the CTBT, were negotiated successfully under the same rules.

Such facts signify that the problems faced by the Conference on Disarmament are not of an organizational or procedural nature. Therefore, it is time for us to face the reality and recognize the true reasons why the Conference has been dysfunctional.

The Conference on Disarmament's history clearly demonstrates a pattern of negotiating only those agreements that do not undermine or compromise the security interests of powerful States. The Biological Weapons Convention and the CWC were negotiated only when biological and chemical weapons became redundant in terms of their operational utility. The CTBT was concluded once the major Powers had carried out a sufficient number of nuclear tests and further testing became unnecessary when they had alternative techniques available in the form of computer simulation.

The same is the case with the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Now, after having developed huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, as well as stocks of fissile material, especially highly enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium that can be quickly converted into nuclear warheads, those major Powers are ready to conclude a treaty that will ban only future production of fissile material, since they no longer need more of it. That approach is cost-free to them as it will not undermine or compromise their security.

Moreover, in the past few years, the discriminatory policies pursued by some major Powers regarding nuclear cooperation have created insecurities and imbalances. By sacrificing international non-proliferation goals at the altar of power and profit, such policies have accentuated the asymmetry in fissile material stocks in our region. Regrettably, those discriminatory policies continue and have found no opposition among members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, comprised of some of the most ardent supporters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the strongest critics of lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament.

For those reasons, Pakistan has been compelled to take a stand against nuclear selectivity and discrimination. No country can be expected to compromise its fundamental security interests for an instrument that is cost-free to all other concerned countries.

If an honest and objective approach is adopted to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the whole disarmament machinery, the following steps and measures would need to be taken.

The agenda of the Conference on Disarmament covers a number of critical issues, and all issues need to be treated in an equal and balanced manner. Lack of progress on one issue due to the security concerns of States should not lead to an impasse in the Conference, as other issues on its agenda can and should be taken up for consideration.

Nuclear disarmament remains the longest outstanding issue on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement, which represents the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations, has consistently deemed nuclear disarmament the highest priority for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. That priority was again reaffirmed in the statement made by the representative of NAM yesterday. The plenary meeting should take due note of it.

The proposal for a legal instrument on negative security assurances is another important issue that has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for several years. A legally binding instrument on negative security assurances would not compromise the strategic interests of any country. In reality, no nuclear-weapon State would consider using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. Even the threat of doing so is morally reprehensible.

We need to recognize the realities and work towards building consensus in the Conference on Disarmament by taking into account the legitimate security interests of all States. The Conference cannot negotiate by cherry-picking issues that some States consider to be ripe. The nuclear-weapon States need to fulfil their obligations to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. Double standards and selectivity in non-proliferation and disarmament measures must be eliminated.

Practical efforts to revitalize the international disarmament machinery must involve convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as called for in the NAM statement delivered yesterday. Such a session can make a far-reaching contribution towards furthering the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in a non-discriminatory, balanced and transparent manner, keeping in view the security interests of all States.

Before concluding, I would like to strike a note of caution against taking the FMCT outside the Conference on Disarmament for negotiations, as we consider the Conference the sole negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament.

In that regard, let me mention some of the arguments made by a major nuclear Power in 2005 in response to the intention of some Member States to introduce a draft resolution in the First Committee that sought to establish ad hoc committees under the General Assembly on the four core issues of the Conference on Disarmament. That nuclear Power stated:

> "The international community needs to continue to focus on getting the CD [Conference on Disarmament] to work, rather than create another 'phantom' CD. ...
>
> "We do not conduct negotiations on vital issues of national and global security via majority vote.
>
> "The reasons for the existing impasse at the CD are no more soluble in New York than they are in Geneva. ... [T]he outcome of this resolution will be to retard the very international non-proliferation and disarmament objectives that its sponsors seek to advance."

While conveying that position, that country expressly stated that it would not participate in any such process and that it would not be bound in any way by any agreement emerging from such a body. It is interesting to note that the same country is now seeking ways to take a particular issue out of the Conference on Disarmament. Such a paradoxical approach is inexplicable.

Let me reiterate that Pakistan will not join any such process, nor would it consider accession to the outcome of any such process. It must be borne in mind that taking the FMCT out of the Conference on Disarmament for negotiations would also create a precedent for a similar modus operandi on other items on the Conference agenda, such as nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his important statement at the 113th meeting, which affirms his personal commitment to disarmament. My thanks also go to Ms. Olga Pellicer, Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, who was kind enough to inform us of the deliberations of her Committee on the agenda item.

My delegation welcomes the initiative taken to organize the high-level meeting, believing that it provides a new opportunity for Member States to continue more clearly and in greater depth their exchanges that began on 24 September 2010, at the initiative of the Secretary-General.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made at the 113th meeting by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Algeria attaches the highest importance to disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The debates on the future of the Conference on Disarmament receive the special attention of the Algerian

Government. In fact, given the threats to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, the points of view stated today focus on the virtues of multilateral negotiation as the preferred means of taking legitimate security concerns into account, in a spirit of fairness, responsibility and transparency.

Given the varied areas that it deals with, the continued deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament is clearly a cause for real concern. That situation affects the interests of non-nuclear-weapon States in particular. Algeria believes that that deadlock cannot be blamed on a failure of that institutional machinery or on its way of operating. Thus it cannot be attributed to its rules of procedure, in particular the rule of consensus, or on the agenda of the Conference.

However, some believe that the impasse is due to the inflexibility of the rules of procedure, and they propose limiting the scope of the rule of consensus solely to substantive issues and resorting to the vote for procedural matters, such as the establishment of a subsidiary body. It must be said that it is not always easy to differentiate between aspects of substance and those dealing with form, especially when it comes to the particulars of a subsidiary body.

It is clear that the consensus rule is also a way to protect the national security interests of all States equally, not only the strongest. Taking into account the security interests of all, that rule in principle gives legitimacy to a treaty once it has been concluded and ensures its universality and effectiveness.

With regard to the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, Algeria believes that its components — inspired, moreover, by the Decalogue and underscoring the nuclear threat — are still valid. Indeed, nuclear weapons are still the most serious threat to humankind.

It is worth recalling that the Conference on Disarmament has certainly contributed to multilateral disarmament. Established in 1978 by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament precisely to revitalize the disarmament machinery at that time, its mandate was to facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at that special session (resolution S-10/2, part III). Specifically, the Conference on Disarmament made it possible to adopt the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, even though the latter has still not entered into force.

Following those two achievements, the Conference was unable to make any further progress. Indeed, the reasons for the deadlock can be found in disarmament and security policies developments outside the framework of the Conference.

In reality, the clear lack of political will to take on all the items on the Conference agenda, on the one hand, and attempts to establish a hierarchy among the points of the Decalogue linked to uncertainties in regional security balances, on the other, are at the root of the current deadlock. The Conference on Disarmament cannot continue its fundamental work without Member States showing the necessary political will to come to joint solutions and to truly deal with challenges to the security of all and to international peace. Therefore, one should act in that regard rather that threaten to condemn the Conference on Disarmament to marginalization by resorting to another mechanism.

It has been proposed that if the deadlock continues, other forums to negotiate the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) could be envisaged. My delegation believes that such a step could prejudice the stated goal of the treaty, namely, the strengthening of non-proliferation, the promotion of nuclear disarmament and universal accession, which remain necessary to give such an agreement the requisite political basis and credibility.

The General Assembly cannot strip the Conference on Disarmament of its prerogatives, or even replace it or deprive it of any fundamental part of its mandate. Apart from setting a precedent heavy with consequences, such a step would call into question the universality and balance to be maintained among the Conference's central and supplementary aspects.

In any case, Algeria supports a comprehensive and balanced approach in the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work that takes the priorities and concerns of all into account. Such a programme of work should address all items on the agenda of the Conference, in particular the main issues that I have just mentioned. In that spirit, the Algerian delegation continues to believe that decision CD/1864, adopted by consensus in May 2009, is still valid. That decision was certainly not a perfect result, but the outcome of a compromise that, as stated in its preamble, is part of a process of development.

Decision CD/1864 did not establish a hierarchy of priorities. It seeks to launch a process of interactive discussions and negotiations to engender a climate of trust and carry out the negotiations on nuclear disarmament and other matters. It would seem that that aspect of decision CD/1864, which is set out clearly in its preamble, has often been forgotten by some and obscured by others, who have retained only the negotiation of the FMCT.

Algeria remains convinced of the need to reiterate the international community's commitment to the vocation of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral framework for disarmament negotiation. Should differences that prevent the Conference from discharging its mandate persist, it would be fitting to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That would be the opportunity to reaffirm that vocation in the framework of a more comprehensive consideration of the disarmament issues, which should give rise to a new consensus on disarmament priorities and the disarmament machinery, including coordination between the deliberative bodies and the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum.

With regard to the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Board for Disarmament Matters, Algeria supports any initiative likely to promote or effectively relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament, while respecting its original mandate.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): Japan would like to associate itself with the statements made at the 113th meeting by the representatives of Australia, on behalf of the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, and of the Netherlands, on behalf of more than 40 countries.

In realizing a world without nuclear weapons, multilateral disarmament efforts by all nuclear-weapon States and concerted action on the part of the international community as a whole are essential. From that standpoint, the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum is highly important, as it brings together nuclear-weapon States and States not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Conference and its preceding body have drafted critical treaties in the area of disarmament, such as the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, th Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensiv Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Nearly one year has passed since the high-leve meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference o Disarmament and taking forward multilatera disarmament negotiations, in which a unanimou political consensus to break the deadlock of th Conference on Disarmament was achieved. Howeve during this period we have not been able to seize th opportunity afforded by such consensus.

As the anniversaries of the atomic bombings o Hiroshima and Nagasaki once again approach and th endurance of Japan's citizens approaches its limits further stagnation cannot be permitted. We mus immediately begin substantive work on the core agend items of the Conference on Disarmament and mus advance nuclear disarmament, the fissile material cut off treaty (FMCT), negative security assurances an prevention of an arms race in outer space.

If the Conference on Disarmament is unable t break the deadlock, we must consider appropriat alternatives, such as making greater use of the Genera Assembly. In that regard, it is extremely regrettabl that uncooperative action on the part of one country has prevented the Conference from carrying out it highly important work of advancing nuclea disarmament for the good of the internationa community. That state of affairs also calls into questio the Conference's current form.

From that viewpoint, today's follow-up meetin and the upcoming session of the General Assembly particularly the meetings of the First Committee i October, provide us with important opportunities fo the advancement of nuclear disarmament an revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament an disarmament machinery.

Japan places particular importance on an earl launch of the FMCT negotiations. Together with th Government of Australia, we have hosted three exper side events on the margin of the Conference o Disarmament and have had more detailed discussion on complex technical issues than have ever taken plac within the Conference. Following those side events, i addition to the informal meetings of the Conference o Disarmament on the FMCT held in the past severa years, we can consider that the technical discussion have, for the most part, been completed. We ar

therefore now at the stage where we must begin the negotiations. We must proceed with political discussions to that end.

Cooperating closely with nine other non-nuclear-weapon States, Japan recently launched the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative. We have already convened two ministerial-level meetings, in September last year and in April this year, to contribute to the steadfast implementation of agreements reached on certain issues at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Japan is determined to develop, in full cooperation with those nine States, effective proposals to achieve concrete progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including an early start of the negotiations towards the FMCT and enhancement of transparency.

It is essential to maintain the successful momentum of the most recent NPT Review Conference and to continue to promote positive action towards disarmament and non-proliferation. Much can also be done here in New York to support such action. To that end, Japan co-organized a seminar with Poland and Turkey in May this year, receiving a strongly positive response from the diplomatic community in New York. I look forward to further efforts of that kind so as to make a continuing contribution to promoting disarmament and non-proliferation and to lead to the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and disarmament machinery.

Mr. Cabral (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like first to commend the President for scheduling this debate at this very appropriate moment. Disarmament and non-proliferation are issues of global concern. Thus, the observer States welcome this opportunity to offer their views.

At the outset, I can affirm that the group's members are fully committed to the Conference on Disarmament and to its revitalization. While recognizing that revitalization is a multidimensional process, I will limit my remarks to the topic of enlargement, as it constitutes the raison d'être of our group.

In fact, enlargement is long overdue, as the last expansion dates back to 1999. Allow me at this point to recall that the rules of procedure state that "The membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals" — which is hardly the case.

However, the main reason for our appeal is political. In fact, our reasoning is quite simple and straightforward. The current membership of the Conference on Disarmament no longer reflects the world as it is. Twelve years have passed since the most recent expansion. That situation is not compatible with today's reality and is certainly not sustainable if the goal is to get the Conference back to work.

Picking a line repeated countless times, the Conference on Disarmament does not work in a vacuum. Indeed, it should not. However, in order to be reconnected with the international community and with reality, the Conference needs, first and foremost, to understand that the world has changed since 1999.

The Conference on Disarmament should become more open and more inclusive. It should seriously and urgently consider inviting more countries to join, making it more representative of the world in which we live. Furthermore, we ought to keep in mind that while the membership of the Conference is limited, the decisions are global in nature. They matter to all.

To be truly successful, that transformation process should be inclusive and fully transparent, rather than limited and conservative. In our view, enlargement is an asset, not a liability. It represents a new opportunity, a fresh start, for the Conference on Disarmament. The simple fact that there are countries which have an interest in joining the Conference represents a clear and powerful political statement in favour of its continued relevance in today's world. If we may say so, enlargement would work to renew the legitimacy of the Conference, which, bearing in mind the current state of affairs, is something that should be duly considered.

In this context, we reiterate our call for the early nomination of a special rapporteur to review the issue of membership. In any case — and allow me to be very clear on this point — the appointment of a rapporteur does not prejudge any particular outcome. Needless to say, decisions are up to the member States of the Conference on Disarmament.

We also take this opportunity to stress that our view is shared by a large number of Member States, regional groups and other formations — for example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the

European Union and the Eastern European Group — which, during this year's session and today again, expressed their strong support for the expansion of the membership and for the appointment of a special rapporteur.

Our group spoke on the issue of expansion of the Conference on Disarmament during several of the Conference's plenary sessions during the first two parts of its 2011 annual session. We also briefed the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on the matter at its 56th session. Thus we reiterate our call for the issue of membership to be considered in the context of the ongoing revitalization debate.

While I have the floor, I should like to make a few more additional comments on a national basis. In this capacity, we fully subscribe to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union at the 113th meeting and that of the informal group of observer States that I have just delivered.

I would like to state that my country recognizes the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Portugal is therefore committed to actively supporting the Conference's work. By the same token, the Conference must also do its part, namely, to take keep pace with the current disarmament agenda.

We should keep in mind that while the Conference's membership is limited, its decisions are global in nature. They matter to us all. The fact therefore that there are countries interested in joining the Conference despite the longstanding stalemate represents an unequivocal and powerful political statement in favour of the Conference's relevance. In our view, such enlargement would strengthen the Conference's legitimacy. While we recognize that enlargement is not in itself the solution, it is certainly part of the answer for a better functioning Conference.

Mr. Waxman (Israel): Israel assigns importance to discussing the issue of the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament. It is indeed timely that we discuss this issue in earnest — not merely because of the longstanding stalemate that has characterized the Conference's work, but mainly because of the calls to take outside the Conference issues that fall under the agenda of that body, or even to replace the Conference with another body purportedly more suited for the task.

Israel does not support those calls, nor do we find them helpful for the promotion of meaningful work in the Conference. While there can be no disputing that the Conference is in need of an updated and clear vision that would allow it to overcome the extended stalemate, its revitalization has to take place from within the Conference itself. There are no magic wands that will provide us with a better solution or an institution that would conduct a more meaningful disarmament negotiating process.

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique entity that is widely recognized as the sole multilateral negotiating body in the disarmament sphere. Its uniqueness stems from its membership — which includes the States of greatest relevance to these issues — and from its rules of procedure. Although the rules of procedure are criticized by some as outdated and as a reflection of past geopolitical realities, Israel remains convinced that they are well suited to the complexity and sensitivity of the issues placed on the Conference's agenda. The rules of procedure, particularly the rule of consensus, reflect the need to protect vital security interests and to provide negotiating States with the comfort levels required for dealing with such critical issues.

One must examine sincerely whether the complexities of the multilateral arena ought to be circumvented by the attempts to take outside the Conference the issues that were mandated to it in accordance with the General Assembly's special session on disarmament in 1978, and whether such attempts could yield the desired results.

In the conventional sphere, independent processes have not been able to date to attract into their fold the most relevant countries — those whose participation in the new legal arrangement will make the most significant changes to the situation on the ground. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is definitely such a case. While over a hundred States signed this instrument, a realistic examination shows that around 90 per cent of cluster munitions arsenals have remained outside the treaty. Relevant States have simply not gone along and are seeking solutions elsewhere. In this respect, the non-conventional sphere is even more complex.

Israel does not regard taking issues out of the Conference on Disarmament as a viable or a helpful proposal. We are of the view that the Conference

should focus on ways to enhance its own productivity in ways that would be meaningful. While a stalemate persists over the four core issues, there is no reason why the Conference should not conduct substantive work, and indeed negotiations, on other issues on its agenda.

An agreed formula could and should be found that recognizes the continued importance and validity that the international community attributes to the four core issues, and at the same time steers the Conference into a pragmatic approach, which will result in negotiating other issues which may have a vital impact on security and stability. One such important item is agenda item 4, dedicated to transparency in armaments. There are many issues of importance that could be taken up under this agenda item, such as negotiating a ban on the transfer of armaments to terrorists or man-portable air defence systems. As long as the stalemate continues, an agreement could and should be reached on the promotion of other relevant issues.

The Conference on Disarmament has served the international community well in past years. It is too vital an institution to be cast aside. We are confident that the Conference has much to contribute in the future. Let us not take a path that might prevent this institution from doing so. Instead, let us focus on realistic and useful ways to heave this wagon forward.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to associate myself with the statement made at the 113th meeting by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like to begin my statement with a wise proverb, which says, "A poor workman blames his tools". As a tool, the Conference on Disarmament, through the development of major international legal instruments on disarmament, has perfectly proven its efficiency and the effectiveness of its rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus, even in the complex political and security context of the cold war.

Although there are continued attempts to conceal the political nature of Conference inactivity using technical questions, such as its rules of procedure, as the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters appropriately concluded in its recent report, what appeared to be procedural problems are in fact political ones.

The lack of political will is the principal problem of the Conference on Disarmament. Consequently, the only option to give a boost to its activity is to inject political will into this important and irreplaceable forum, which is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament.

We believe that any possible initiative to assess the Conference's performance should be transparent, comprehensive, fair and, most importantly, driven by Member States. It should focus on addressing the root causes of the problem. The main objective of any such assessment should be to enhance the performance of the Conference while preserving its nature, role, purpose and power.

In any performance appraisal of the Conference, we have to be cautious not to mix our considerations with exaggeration, pessimism, prejudgment and distrustful emotional diagnoses, as such an approach would only further complicate and aggravate the situation.

Unlike some who favour changing the consensus rule of the Conference, we believe that the Conference cannot be improved by changing the format or modality of its rules of procedure, because, due to the sensitive nature of disarmament treaties that are closely related to the supreme national security interests of States, consensus is the only way to develop such treaties, as was the case in the past when disarmament treaties were concluded both within and outside the Conference.

The inactivity in the Conference over the past decade resulted from the lack of political will; the disinclination of some States to take into account the security interests of all States and to consider all core issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner; the fact that some countries consider the Conference as a single-issue venue and are not willing to recognize the importance of other issues; the unwillingness of certain countries even to start the much longed-for and long-delayed negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention to eliminate the threat posed to humanity by the existence of such weapons, while nuclear disarmament has been identified by the international community as the highest priority in the field of disarmament, as reflected in the consensus outcome (resolution S-10/2) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I); and the reluctance of those States to negotiate universal, legally binding

instruments on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We consider the total elimination of nuclear weapons to be the highest priority and the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. For that reason, we believe that the Conference should focus on advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda and the total elimination of nuclear weapons, leading to a world free of nuclear weapons.

In this context, we strongly support the early commencement by the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, including a nuclear weapons convention. We also support a start to negotiations to conclude universal, unconditional and legally binding instruments on negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We underline the validity of multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and, while we reiterate our determination to promote this valuable principle, we recall the paramount importance and continued validity of the consensus outcome SSOD-I. We strongly believe that, since the Conference on Disarmament was established by SSOD-I, the best way to address its challenges is to convene a fourth special session — a proposal that enjoys the strong support of many countries, in particular the 120 States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Finally, we believe that the roles of neither such a fourth special session nor of the Conference on Disarmament can be replaced with alternative initiatives. The problems presently facing the Conference on Disarmament are nothing new. The best way to address this challenge is to cross the stream where it is shallowest.

Ms. Anderson (Ireland): The High-level Meeting convened by the Secretary-General in September 2010 was helpful in highlighting States' views on the root causes of the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. That meeting also underlined the strong desire of the international community to move from discussion to action. It is not only the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament that need to be reassessed, but those of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and of the First Committee as well. All three bodies must be more responsive and ready to change the way they go about their business.

My country's approach to disarmament is rooted in the firm conviction that multilateral cooperation is in the interest of all, and most particularly serves the interests of smaller States, which rely on a strong, rules-based international system. One of the main reasons we have convened here is because the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body — the Conference on Disarmament — is not functioning properly. Given the Conference's vitally important remit, this dysfunction is deeply worrying.

As we search for a solution, it is worth remembering that the Conference on Disarmament has, in the past, made an outstanding contribution in the area of arms control and disarmament. There is no reason why it cannot do so again.

Given this track record, it is all the more disappointing that the Conference has not managed to engage in the substantive work of negotiation for more than 16 years. Ireland has not seen any meaningful work done there since we became a member in 1999. This situation is hard to explain or defend. It is a poor reflection on multilateralism and has obvious implications for international peace and security. While the stagnation in the Conference on Disarmament might have been understandable while there was no movement in the wider disarmament context, it now stands in stark contrast to the positive developments we have seen elsewhere in recent years.

Ireland stands ready to engage in negotiations on any or all of the four core issues on the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. While every State has the right to promote and defend its national security interests, in our view the consensus rule was never envisaged as a mechanism to allow one State to frustrate the desire of the vast majority of the membership to engage in negotiations on any particular issue. The resulting inability of the Conference on Disarmament to engage in negotiations on any issue on its agenda is, in our view, unsustainable. Negotiations on any of the core issues will take time — in all likelihood many years. Specific national concerns can be accommodated in the course of negotiations and, in any event, agreement cannot be imposed under the consensus rule. It is

axiomatic, however, that negotiations must begin if agreement is ever to be reached.

My country's primary objective in the Conference on Disarmament is the promotion of nuclear disarmament. This may be facilitated in a number of ways, including by the conclusion of an appropriate treaty on fissile material, which would include a verification mechanism and cover existing stocks, and of a universal, legally-binding agreement on negative security assurances. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is an issue deserving of urgent attention before the window of opportunity to prevent such an arms race is lost.

While substantive differences are at the root of the paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament, we believe that the way in which the Conference organizes itself it is a contributory factor. Requiring consensus even to begin negotiations, as well as for the most basic procedural decisions, is conducive to the kind of deadlock with which we are all too familiar.

Another factor inhibiting progress is the interpretation of the requirement to adopt annually a programme of work necessitating the inclusion of complex negotiating mandates and other details, rather than being merely a calendar of activities, as in most other multilateral bodies.

The expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament and the greater involvement of civil society in its work would, in our view, enhance the representation in the Conference of global public opinion and strengthen its standing and credibility.

Like other speakers, I welcome the recommendations made by the Secretary-General's Advisory Board and hope that they can guide us forward in breaking the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time, we cannot evade the stark reality that the responsibility for devising and implementing solutions to global problems rests primarily with States. The issue is fundamentally that of political will.

Such responsibilities go well beyond the Conference on Disarmament alone. The Disarmament Commission has had no substantive outcome for 12 years in succession, a situation which should not continue. The working practices of the First Committee also need the attention of Member States.

While the Committee should be the principal forum for debate on the most pressing issues in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and how to address them, we see instead an ineffective use of time, with the ritualistic submission of resolutions whose content remains virtually unchanged from year to year, in many cases adding limited value.

In this time of austerity, all of us have to justify how we allocate our scarce resources. Functioning disarmament machinery is a priority, but there has to be a relationship between input and outcome.

I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that our exchanges today will act as a call to action and will encourage those most directly concerned to reassess their approach, accepting the responsibility they share with the international community to engage, to negotiate and to formulate agreements which will lead us towards the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Ireland stands ready to consider all ideas for taking us forward, including the recommendations to the Secretary-General by the Advisory Board, through General Assembly activity and also the possibility — an idea to which Ireland is fully open — of another special session on disarmament. We look forward to further discussions in the First Committee in October.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, as I see so many seats empty in this Hall and note the absence of so many of my colleagues who are firmly committed to disarmament and non-proliferation and who have a great interest in today's debate, let me say that I find it regrettable that, owing to organizational problems in connection with this debate, the level of participation is low, as is the turnout.

My country aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the States that requested that this debate be convened.

Uruguay was one of the countries that requested a plenary meeting under agenda item 162, entitled "Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations". We therefore welcome this meeting.

The high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010 made clear the importance that the States Members of the United Nations attach to multilateralism and the widespread concern at impasse affecting the Conference on Disarmament, which undermines its credibility and affects the United Nations system as a whole.

It also became clear that there was a need promptly to start negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty aimed at banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and a need to start substantive work on nuclear disarmament issues, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Regrettably, the Conference on Disarmament once again lost an invaluable opportunity in the substantive session this year, as it was unable to make progress on the issues under its consideration or to send any hopeful signals that the situation would change in the near future.

We all are aware of and have recognized the achievements of the Conference on Disarmament, and its predecessors, as a genuine forum where the main instruments of arms limitation were created, to the benefit of the international community as a whole. However, more than 13 years of inaction cannot be justified on the basis of intrinsic deficiencies in the system, lack of political will or the need for consensus. Membership and consensus are privileges that come with responsibilities, thus the Conference on Disarmament must meet the expectations vested in its members, discharge the mandate entrusted to it and work according to the needs of our times.

Uruguay acknowledges the fact that in view of such a widespread sense of failure, it is imperative to seek quick and effective solutions in order to relaunch the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

To that end, I should like to put forward three specific proposals for the revitalization of multilateral negotiations in these areas.

First, we must take advantage of the current political juncture, which has allowed for a return to moderate multilateralism. There must be a reaffirmation of the prerogatives and legitimacy of the bodies that the international community has created to deal with disarmament matters, and respect for international law must be upheld as indispensable norm for the peaceful coexistence of nations.

Accordingly, Uruguay calls on the Conference on Disarmament to start, without further delay, negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty for the prohibition of the production of fissile material intended for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Our country also urges that unconditional negotiations for a legally binding agreement on negative security assurances be commenced so as to ensure that non-nuclear States do not suffer from the disastrous consequences of the use or threat of use of this type of weapons by nuclear-weapon States.

Non-nuclear States' justified interest in and legitimate aspirations to negative security assurances are legally and politically supported by Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations. Likewise, Uruguay calls for the negotiation of new, effective and verifiable multilateral instruments, with a view to preventing an arms race, including the deployment of weapons in outer space.

Secondly, Uruguay believes that one way to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament would be to extend its membership to those States that have expressed a legitimate interest in joining. In this respect, I associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observers of the Conference on Disarmament. Our country has formalized its aspiration to join the Conference on Disarmament, along with 25 other States that since 1982 have advocated for the expansion of that body. Uruguay therefore proposes appointing a special coordinator for the Conference on Disarmament in order to study the expansion of its membership in 2011.

Thirdly, if the Conference on Disarmament is not capable of overcoming its impasse, the General Assembly must inevitably act according to the mandate conferred on it by the United Nations Charter, whose Article 11 establishes that the Assembly

> "may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Security Council".

Mr. Çobanoğlu (Turkey): Turkey attaches great significance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and we wish to see the resumption of its substantive work. For this reason, Turkey was a co-signatory to the letter that requested the convening of today's meeting.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the 41 countries that signed that letter. Turkey also aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Australia on behalf of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. Since many of our views have already been covered by those statements, I will confine myself to the following additional points in my national capacity.

First, while there are many different views as to how revitalize the Conference on Disarmament, our preference for this revitalization process is that it take place within the Conference itself. Having said that, other efforts, such as today's meeting, could be useful to build momentum and convey the strong expectation of the international community for the resumption of the substantive work of the Conference.

Secondly, while concentrating on the revitalization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, we should not lose sight of the fact that the existing problems are not limited to the Conference. In fact, they cover all the multilateral disarmament machinery. This is not to say that the problems lie with the United Nations disarmament machinery. On the contrary, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon very eloquently put it in his opening statement yesterday (see A/65/PV.113), the problem lies not with the vehicle but with the driver. We are convinced that these problems can be comprehensively overcome only through political will and flexibility, which are to be shown by all parties.

Thirdly, any discussion on the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament should take into account the fact that the rule of consensus is an essential tool when it comes to international security issues. All countries may need this tool from time to time in order to safeguard their legitimate security interests. In our opinion, there is no alternative to the rule of consensus.

Finally, unlike some other delegations, we believe that the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament is not a priority within the context of its revitalization. In our view, the present impasse in the Conference on Disarmament has nothing to do with its composition. In fact, if the Conference cannot resolve its problems within its existing composition, it would be highly unlikely, if not impossible, for these problems to be solved within an enlarged group, which will represent difference priorities and different interests. We also believe that any discussion on the enlargement of the Conference should address the question of the potential contributions of the aspiring Conference members to its work on a case-by-case basis.

We hope to see the Conference revitalized, the concerns of all Member States addressed, substantive work on the core issues initiated and the long-standing stalemate thus overcome with the present membership composition of the Conference.

Mr. Raytchev (Bulgaria): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation to President Deiss and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for convening this debate. Being among the countries that called for it, we are especially grateful to be given the opportunity to have a follow-up discussion to the High-level Meeting on the Revitalization of the Work of the Conference on Disarmament, held in September 2010.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and with that made by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of a cross-regional group of States. I will just highlight a few points that are important to us.

We all hoped that the High-level Meeting held in September 2010 would stimulate positive developments in the Conference on Disarmament. Regrettably, this has not been the case, and the Conference has so far failed to seize the momentum in global disarmament and non-proliferation. However, we all agree that the impasse cannot and should not continue. Fifteen years have already been lost, and we cannot afford the luxury of losing even more time.

The irony is that the Conference on Disarmament should be more relevant than ever and overloaded with work now, in times of asymmetrical threats and common security challenges, and the international community should be more convinced than ever of multilateralism as the appropriate approach. The longer

the impasse continues, the more the relevance of the Conference on Disarmament is called into question.

The excuses for this — the consensus rule and the lack of political will, among others — are well-known. The Conference on Disarmament itself cannot be blamed. The responsibility lies with us, its members. Change should come from within. We should all ask ourselves how strongly we want to make the Conference on Disarmament relevant and credible again. The consensus rule is there, but we need to be creative about it instead of using it to hold the Conference hostage. This rule was created in order to enable members to express their common will based on compromise and not in order to impose the view of one member on all.

The world is interconnected. New realities require new approaches. If the Conference on Disarmament does not adapt to the new challenges and conditions quickly, it will render itself irrelevant. The new dynamic is fast-paced, as should be the response of the Conference. The Conference must deliver, or it risks pushing the international community to explore alternative avenues for multilateral negotiations related to disarmament and non-proliferation.

A revitalized Conference on Disarmament means a functioning Conference on Disarmament that is in line with the new realities. The two most pressing issues, however, persist: first, the adoption of a programme of work; and secondly, the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without delay. Any national security concern, if legitimate, could be addressed as part of a negotiation process rather than blocking the substantive work of the Conference. Nothing should be precluded from consideration if negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty were to start.

Enlargement of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament would definitely be a step towards adapting to the new realities. New members would bring new energy and new ideas. Civil society is also a part of the process, and non-governmental organizations and research institutions have an important role to play. We join the calls for improved methods of work, for the First Committee and the United Nations Disarmament Commission as well.

We stand ready to work for these goals in the run up to the sixty-sixth session of the First Committee in October. I would like to conclude, however, by citing Bertholt Brecht who said "because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are". This idea is 100 per cent applicable to the Conference on Disarmament as it is today.

Mr. Cabactulan (Philippines): The Philippines associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My delegation also supports the statement delivered by the representatives of Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament and of the Netherlands on behalf of the group of like-minded States.

The Philippines reaffirms its belief that multilateral diplomacy is the best way to achieve further progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. At the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in May 2010, States parties took a significant step forward in these areas when they adopted the Conference's Outcome Document (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)). In this regard, the Philippines reminds States parties of their obligation to implement the action plan, as well as the section on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, as listed in the conclusions and recommendations section of the Document.

One action was undertaken when the High-level Meeting was held in September 2010. The debate today is a continuation of that Meeting held almost one year ago. In spite of the time that has elapsed since then — in fact, in the more than 15 years that have passed since the Conference on Disarmament agreed on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — the impasse persists.

This Sisyphean state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. Based on discussions at the last High-level Meeting in September, the Philippines and many other delegations find the situation untenable. The Conference on Disarmament must agree on and implement a programme of work. If it cannot, other definitive actions must be undertaken. Furthermore, since the bottom-up approach has paralysed efforts to reform the Conference due to the fact that the rule of consensus vests in every Conference member a veto-like power, it is now imperative that the General Assembly, which created the Conference on

Disarmament, assert its power through a top-down approach.

The Philippines, together with several other delegations that form the informal group of observer States, sees an urgent need for the Conference on Disarmament to expand its membership. In the interest of promoting greater inclusivity and dynamism in the Conference, the Philippines calls for a review of the membership of the Conference as provided for in its rules of procedure, and to allow for the expansion of its membership. Numerous countries, presently observers in the Conference, possess the legitimate aspiration to full membership. To facilitate this review, the Philippines calls for the Conference on Disarmament to appoint a special rapporteur/coordinator on enlargement.

Yet, alternative means must also be considered. The Conference on Disarmament may be known as the sole multilateral disarmament body, but disarmament agreements have been conceived outside it, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Under these Conventions, not all countries joined at their inceptions and in fact still have not joined, but that does not preclude the possibility of States eventually becoming parties. The key, as the Philippines sees it, is to begin negotiations at the soonest possible time.

Another method that could be emulated is the way in which preparations are being made for the negotiation of an arms trade treaty, which fell within the ambit of the General Assembly, which decided that a United Nations Conference would be held to negotiate the treaty. The Philippines also continues to support calls for convening the fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD-IV), which could comprehensively reappraise and revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery.

For my delegation, what is important is not which body negotiates, but that negotiations actually begin and result in something more tangible and concrete than mere factual reports of meetings, as was the case with the last meeting of the Disarmament Commission in April.

We the States present here today have a choice and a difficult decision to make. Do we remain and stay confined in the Conference on Disarmament, hoping that intractable issues that have plagued the Conference will magically dissipate over time, leading to genuine progress towards negotiating a disarmament agenda? Or do we dare to go beyond and follow, for instance, the path taken by a significant number of countries in seeking alternative recourse, as was the case in the negotiations for the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions? Do we set up a process parallel to the Conference on Disarmament? Do we hope that we can replicate the success of the first special session on disarmament in 1978 and pin our hopes on SSOD-IV? Do we have to commission some high-level group to study further what must be done? Do we go the route of the General Assembly and give this body a more central and active role to move multilateral disarmament negotiations forward?

The right answer is unfortunately unclear. What is clear to us is that we must make a choice and follow through on it sooner rather than later. The choice might be to give the General Assembly a more central and active role and seek innovative and alternative means of causing multilateral disarmament negotiations to advance. If we do not make a choice and act, we will doom ourselves to stagnation and inactivity, thereby increasing the chance that weapons that have been held in abeyance thus far may be unleashed to devastating and horrific effect.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): I join other colleagues in thanking the President for convening this follow-up meeting to the High-level Meeting convened by the Secretary-General, which was attended by our Minister for External Affairs, His Excellency Sri S. M. Krishna, on 24 September 2010.

India associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Almost one year has elapsed since the convening of the High-level Meeting. The Conference on Disarmament is still unable to undertake its primary task of negotiating multilateral treaties. We share the disappointment of the Member States on the continuing impasse in the Conference. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament or its rules of procedure are not to be blamed for this impasse. We believe that today's meeting should send a strong message of support for the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and to provide political impetus to the multilateral agenda, which includes early commencement of negotiations on

an fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament adopted a consensus decision in May 2009 on its programme of work, which included the immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The High-level Meeting of 24 September 2010 demonstrated a very broad measure of support for CD/1864. In fact, the first recommendation of that meeting, reiterated subsequently by the Secretary-General in his address to the Conference on Disarmament on 26 January, calls for the Conference to adopt that, or a similar programme of work, in 2011.

India will not stand in the way if consensus emerges on a programme of work that picks up from where we were in terms of the consensus decision CD/1864, if such a decision facilitates the early commencement of substantive work in the Conference, including negotiation of an FMCT on the basis of the mandate contained in CD/1299. This is without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament.

India has been steadfast in its support for global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi presented a visionary action plan for a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order. This plan sets out a road map for achieving nuclear disarmament in a time-bound, universal, non-discriminatory, phased and verifiable manner. It may be recalled that the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2) accorded nuclear disarmament the highest priority. We believe that the goal of nuclear disarmament can be achieved by a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework that is global and non-discriminatory. We need a meaningful dialogue among all States possessing nuclear weapons in order to build trust and confidence and to reduce the salience of such weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

I would like to reaffirm our support for the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum, recognized as such by the international community. The Conference continues to have the mandate, the membership, the credibility and the rules of procedure to discharge that responsibility. It is up to Member States to make it work by negotiating multilateral treaties that can be universally implemented. Proposals that question the viability or relevance of the Conference, or that suggest unrealistic alternatives, will not lead to useful or productive results in taking forward the agreed multilateral agenda with the participation of all relevant countries. We hope that our discussions today will build positive momentum for the disarmament agenda and reaffirm the critical role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum for achieving our common goals.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): My delegation commends the President for following up on the important High-level Meeting that the Secretary-General convened on 24 September last year on the theme of revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

We also thank President Deiss; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Ms. Olga Pellicer; and Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, for their statements. Their insights and the Secretary-General's summary of the aforementioned meeting point to significant key steps for strengthening the disarmament machinery with a common vision for disarmament and non-proliferation. We also reiterate that disarmament helps address other global challenges, including poverty reduction, climate change and reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Kazakhstan is a firm and consistent supporter of the vision of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as demonstrated by its decision to shut down its nuclear test site and renounce one of the world's largest nuclear arsenals. As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to that forum and the contribution it has made in the past. However, regrettably, the Conference has failed to live up to expectations. Now is the moment to evaluate concrete strategies for overcoming the deadlock of the past decade on generally accepted key issues in order to accelerate the process of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Like other Member States, Kazakhstan agrees that an early start to negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally

verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is critical. Such a treaty would keep illegitimate military nuclear programmes to a minimum and considerably improve control over existing materials, thus greatly reducing the threat of nuclear terrorism.

As the country that is home to the Baikonur Cosmodrome space launch complex, and is involved in international cooperation on outer space, as well as its own national space development on a multilateral cooperative basis, Kazakhstan calls for the strict maintenance of peaceful activities in outer space and urges the Conference to include this issue on its agenda. Considering the increasing number of countries involved in and dependent on space programmes, we should further promote the prevention of an arms race in outer space by engaging other international entities that deal with issues of space exploration.

The President of my country, Nursultan Nazarbayev, speaking at the Global Summit on Nuclear Security in Washington, D.C., in April 2010, has called for the drafting of an international legally binding instrument on security assurances by nuclear Powers to non-nuclear-weapon States. It is only such assurances that can effectively keep in check the aspirations of certain non-nuclear States to acquire nuclear weapons as a guarantee of their own security. The next step should be drafting a universal declaration of a nuclear-weapon-free world, which would reaffirm the determination of all States to move willingly and progressively towards a convention on a nuclear-weapon-free world.

My delegation concurs with other Member States that the present impasse hurts the credibility and calls into question the Conference on Disarmament's relevance. The current stagnation in multilateral negotiations is understood to be due not just to a lack of political will, but also to lacunae in the disarmament machinery.

To summarize, my delegation calls on the General Assembly and member States to consider ways to review the Conference's mandate, membership, structure and procedures of work, as well as to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation measures by immediately starting work on an FMCT, the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, a legally binding treaty for negative security assurances, and a declaration or convention outlawing nuclear weapons. The consensus principle must be reconsidered so as to make the Conference a strong and viable entity, rather than taking the policymaking process outside the United Nations, as has been proposed by some States. The work of the Conference should begin with a relevant and effective agenda both for issues set in the past and for those that will emerge in the near future. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a high-level panel of eminent persons to seek ways to strengthen the disarmament machinery, and especially the Conference on Disarmament.

Finally, in closing, I would like to assure the Assembly that Kazakhstan will take every possible step to strengthen the Conference on Disarmament and enhance its commitment to the multilateral disarmament process.

Mr. Husain (Canada): At the outset, let me thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting on this very important topic. I wish that we were assembling today to celebrate a renewed sense of hope and enthusiasm about prospects for a resumption of multilateral disarmament negotiations. We are not. The Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked and is effectively broken. Critical institutional reform is needed.

That is why, when Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable John Baird, announced the suspension of Canada's participation in the Conference under the presidency of North Korea, Canada also undertook to lead an initiative to reform the methodology for selecting the President of the Conference on Disarmament. Driving such efforts is Canada's belief that leadership of the Conference is a privilege that should be afforded only to those who promote and adhere to the values and objectives of the Conference on Disarmament. As our Minister has said, it is absurd to have one of the world's worst offenders, when it comes to nuclear proliferation and non-compliance, chairing a disarmament body.

Canada was pleased to serve as the first of the Conference's six rotating Presidents for 2011, and is also among several of the countries serving as President with outstanding non-proliferation credentials and a firm commitment to disarmament.

So far this year, Conference members have had discussions on the Conference's four core agenda items. But let us be clear. The mandate of the

Conference on Disarmament is to negotiate, and not simply to discuss, disarmament. The Conference's 2011 session is nearly over, and positions on a programme of work remain deeply entrenched and mutually exclusive. Our efforts to get the Conference back to work in 2011 have not yet proven successful, though Canada will renew efforts towards that end in August, after North Korea is no longer the President —

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on a point of order.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I have asked to speak because the representative of Canada has just referred to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as North Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a State Member of the United Nations, and I kindly ask you, Sir, to call the speaker to order in this matter.

The Acting President: We have taken note of the point of order made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and I ask the representative of Canada to continue with his statement.

Mr. Husain (Canada): In light of the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, Canada believes that efforts to follow up on last September's High-level Meeting must be pursued in earnest. Canada was among those States at last September's High-level Meeting that spoke in favour of a deadline for the Conference if substantive work — including negotiations — had not commenced by this autumn. Specifically, we believe that the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session could also take up consideration of how the work of the Conference should be pursued.

Speaking at the Conference on 28 February, Canada's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Lawrence Cannon, again urged Conference members to think outside of the box. We have seen some positive evidence of new thinking this year. The Australian and Japanese side-event initiative on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) is one clear example. Reluctantly, Canada believes that the time has also come to think outside of the Conference on Disarmament.

An FMCT is Canada's top priority as the next disarmament instrument, and while our preference would be to see negotiations start in the Conference on Disarmament, our patience with non-performing multilateral bodies is not endless. Currently, one country among 65 is blocking the Conference from FMCT negotiations by citing subregional strategic issues. However, tomorrow it could just as easily be another country or countries that abuse the Conference's rule of consensus on a procedural matter in order to stymie substantive multilateral disarmament negotiations. Such was never the intended purpose of the consensus rule.

Canada is of the view that starting an external negotiations process on an FMCT will not further endanger the Conference on Disarmament, which has failed to implement a programme of work since 1998. Accordingly, we welcome the recent statement by the United States that it is consulting on alternative means to begin FMCT negotiations. We agree that success on an FMCT will require the active participation of those States that possess nuclear weapons. With many nuclear-weapon States having declared a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, now is the time to start FMCT negotiations. Universality is something that can be built over time.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada is flexible on the modalities and venue for FMCT negotiations, and will re-engage in the Conference on Disarmament following North Korea's presidency, to focus on reforming the body and pressing ahead with important matters related to its other core agenda items.

We look forward to the broadest possible discussion of the merits of all possible alternative routes to fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations. One idea that remains on the table is having substantive work take place through the creation of subcommittees of the First Committee. Other scenarios have also been put forward. For our part, Canada is not opposed to convening a fourth special session on disarmament, but we are of the view that the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty should not await the outcome of that broader process. We can and should start these negotiations now.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): Viet Nam associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Over the past year, we have witnessed a number of positive developments reflected in the entry into force of the New START treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation in February and the adoption of the Outcome Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF. 2010/50). Still, conflicts continue in various parts of the world, and instability and new dangers to security have emerged in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The danger of an arms race has also increased. Against that backdrop, it is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament remains in a stalemate, as it still cannot even agree on a programme of work.

The lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament has not only prevented the Conference from effectively contributing to the promotion of a more peaceful and secure international environment, but also undermined confidence in that important multilateral disarmament forum.

Due to time constraints, we would like to highlight a number of issues. First, nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority in disarmament. I would like to recall the adoption of resolution 65/56 on nuclear disarmament, which called upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament early in 2011 and to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To that end, I urge nuclear-weapon States to take further substantive and practical actions towards complete nuclear disarmament, particularly by taking the lead in commencing negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention.

Secondly, the central role of the United Nations disarmament machinery in the process of disarmament and non-proliferation and arms control should be upheld. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to adopt a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that covers all pressing issues, such as nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer apace and a fissile material cut-off treaty. To this end, I should like to call for greater political will, flexibility and cooperation.

Thirdly, multilateral disarmament negotiations should be aimed at strengthening peace and international security and achieving the ultimate goal of the elimination of the danger of nuclear war and the implementation of measures to halt and reverse the arms race. Such a negotiations process should be based on the fundamental principles agreed at the first special session of the General Assembly. Those principles include strict observance of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, respect of the right to participate on an equal footing, with a full recognition of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and due consideration for the vital interests of all peoples of the world.

It is the consistent policy of Viet Nam to strive for peace and support the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with the goal of general and complete disarmament. Viet Nam has acceded to all major multilateral treaties on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction and has been an active member of many United Nations disarmament bodies. In the region of South-East Asia, it is also working closely with other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other partners in the implementation of the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone and its Plan of Action. Viet Nam will continue to work with all other international partners in pursuit of further progress in the field of disarmament.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico fully aligns itself with the statements made by the delegation of the Netherlands on behalf of several States and by the delegation of Australia on behalf of those countries participating in the initiative on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mexico also welcomes the action taken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in promoting multilateral negotiations on disarmament in his five-point plan and by convening the high-level meeting held in 2010. Likewise, we take note of the report presented by the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

The 2010 high-level meeting revealed the differing views concerning the dysfunctional nature of the various disarmament forums, particularly the Conference on Disarmament. However, it also showed the tremendous interest of the international community in this issue, which concerns us all given that it affects the security and the very survival of humankind.

Mexico has lent its full support to the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessor bodies, all of

which were created to achieve an aim to which my country attaches the highest priority. It is therefore unacceptable that the forum entrusted with negotiating legally binding instruments to safeguard the security of our peoples has not, over the past 15 years, been able to carry out substantive work on any of the items on its agenda and has failed to fulfil its mandate.

Nor is there agreement on the reasons for the paralysis affecting the Conference on Disarmament. Some contend that this is due to external factors and that the Conference is a victim of circumstances. Others believe that the dysfunctional nature of the forum is a result of the fact that it was designed to work in the context of the cold war, not in the multipolar context of the twenty-first century. The impasse may be the result of a combination of both of those factors. Clearly, the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament were designed for different times. This affects its decision-making as well as its substantive work.

The limited nature of membership of the Conference on Disarmament, the composition of its regional groups and the lack of participation by civil society are also anachronistic factors. However, the greatest obstacle responsible for stymying the work of the Conference has proved to be the consensus rule, which has been construed as the need for absolute unanimity, both on matter of substance and those of form. This interpretation has turned this rule into a right of veto for the 65 members of the Conference on Disarmament. When the veto is exercised, the majority of the international community is robbed of the opportunity to achieve a higher goal that is a priority on the global agenda. The veto has even been used to prevent the adoption of a programme of work. It would appear that a precondition exists that there must be agreement on substance before negotiations can start — forgetting that the Conference on Disarmament has a specific duty to negotiate.

The responsibility of ensuring that the Conference on Disarmament fulfils its mandate falls primarily on its members, but, in the last analysis, it is of concern to all States Members of the United Nations, which in 1978 designated it as the only multilateral forum for disarmament.

This provides us with an opportunity to take a step back and take a look, from the perspective of the General Assembly, at what is happening in Geneva. What we see from here and what is perceived by the 128 States that are not members of the Conference on Disarmament — that is to say, two thirds of the membership — is that over the past 15 years, at least one State member of the Conference on Disarmament was prepared to exercise the right to veto, thus preventing that forum from discharging the mandated entrusted to it by this very Assembly.

We note also that the repeated calls by the General Assembly on the Conference on Disarmament to begin its work have gone unheeded. If this state of affairs continues, it will be logical for the General Assembly to carefully consider this issue and adopt the measures necessary to rescind the prerogatives granted to a body that no longer complies with its wishes.

In 2005, Mexico, together with other countries, proposed that disarmament negotiations should commence in the General Assembly, in the hope that the Conference on Disarmament would adopt its programme of work and fulfil its mandate. Mexico remains prepared to encourage such a step or any other that would offer real possibilities for beginning multilateral negotiations on disarmament.

In conclusion, we trust that the General Assembly, at its upcoming session, will shoulder the responsibility falling to it in this respect.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this debate and for his commitment to revitalizing the disarmament agenda. We also appreciate the interest of the Secretary-General in relaunching negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. The five-point plan and the high-level meeting convened in 2010 are proof of a high degree of political responsibility regarding a matter that is of vital importance for the multilateral system to work effectively and thereby contribute to collective security, development, peace and international security.

Chile aligns itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Permanent Representative of Australia on behalf of the 10 countries involved in the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, and by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the 41 countries concerned.

First and foremost, Chile wishes to reaffirm its commitment to multilateralism in general and in the matter of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in particular. We appreciate the multilateral disarmament and security institutions that protect both our individual security interests and those of the international community as a whole.

It is pointless to go on analyzing the reasons for the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and the dysfunction in the disarmament machinery when what the international community wants is concrete actions and stronger standards and instruments on disarmament and arms limitation. That is a sphere in which we have seen progress and a favourable climate that should permeate the Conference on Disarmament.

After more than 10 unproductive years, the Conference on Disarmament has arrived at a restricted situation that is unsustainable. A revitalization process directed at reaching an agreement allowing it to resume its negotiation function requires a broad political commitment that could take shape in a framework in which countries feel they have an effective forum for participating in creating a safer world and protecting their own legitimate national interests.

Self-diagnosis and debates on the rules of procedure must give way to measures that make it possible to reanimate the Conference in short order or to seek alternatives that could fully serve the interests of the international community. We suggest analyzing document CD/1931, submitted by Colombia, which gives a thorough description of the perceptions, interests and limitations of the Conference on Disarmament.

Revitalizing the Conference requires revising some of its central aspects, such as its composition, procedures and consensus rule. Although we believe in retaining that rule as a way of attaining a broad base on matters in which the security of States is at stake, it should not be abused to the point of paralyzing the Conference on merely procedural matters. The composition of the regional groups is another point that must be analyzed. In the twenty-first century the Conference on Disarmament must not turn its back on civil society. It should build bridges with civil society and have greater interaction with it. All these political issues must be part of a negotiating package.

Chile has a broad and flexible attitude about options that would make possible progress in multilateral negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. We do not intend to replace the Conference on Disarmament. We prefer to work inside it, as the outstanding negotiating forum in the field. Still, we must be clear that we are open to examining alternatives.

The fact that we are meeting here in New York may lead us to establish the right of the General Assembly to take actions on matters of disarmament and non-proliferation, which have a real, direct impact on the role and mandate of the Conference on Disarmament. If the status quo continues, it will be difficult to challenge the legitimacy of such a step.

The subsidiary bodies of the United Nations system are not ends in themselves. They are merely means to satisfy and channel the political aspirations and needs of the international community. Disarmament is a common global good. That is not true of the Conference on Disarmament or other mechanisms of the so-called disarmament machinery that have their origin in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, more than 30 years ago, and that can be changed, as has happened with other bodies. A fourth special session on disarmament could be the suitable forum in which to introduce reforms that would give the international community the tools required by our present circumstances.

We should ask ourselves whether the lack of progress in disarmament negotiations is structurally linked to the Conference on Disarmament, a problem specific to that body, or whether it derives from the strategic and political interests of major players that probably would affect any disarmament forum. If the latter is the case, progress will be achieved only through determined commitment and political will on the part of those players and the international community as a whole.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Allow me first to thank the President of the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General for his personal initiative in organizing today's timely debate under agenda item 162, "Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations". I would like to welcome the presence of Ms. Pellicer, who presides in the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on

Disarmament, whose opinion we await with great anticipation and which we believe will significantly support our work. I would also like to thank Mr. Tokayev, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for his remarks.

Before I start, I would like to align Slovenia with the statements made by the European Union, by Portugal on behalf of the informal group of observer States to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and by the Netherlands on behalf of the countries supporting the initiative on follow-up to the high-level meeting that took place on 24 September 2010.

I wish to make three points regarding today's discussion.

First, we believe that it is now high time for concrete follow-up decisions that should follow the high-level meeting that took place here last September. We hope that after today's meeting we will know more about how to proceed in the next General Assembly session. We equally hope that the Secretary-General's Advisory Board will be useful and will offer the Secretary-General and Member States instrumental advice in this regard.

Secondly, Slovenia believes that the current stalemate in global multilateral disarmament negotiations clearly demonstrates how urgently we need a comprehensive reform of the existing international disarmament machinery. The Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, established in 1979, needs to be adapted to the realities of the contemporary world of the twenty-first century. Above all, it should open its doors to all interested countries that want to contribute to international peace and security. International peace and security is important for all countries in the world, not only for the group of current members of the Conference on Disarmament. We firmly believe that new members would enrich the work of the Conference and help it to overcome the present impasse.

Let me use this opportunity to reiterate our longstanding view that the Conference should commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) without any further delay. We are convinced that an FMCT would effectively complement the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and would guide us further on our way towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, the reinvigoration of the Conference on Disarmament is one of the first steps on the way to reforming the international disarmament machinery. In this regard, we should also reconsider the role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which this year again failed to produce any significant results. The reform should be comprehensive and effective and should also redefine the role of the First Committee.

Finally, Slovenia welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and of many countries to move the disarmament process forward. We expect that in the autumn we will start serious discussions on concrete proposals on how to implement the process that we started in the high-level meeting last year. Time is of the essence, and let me invite all States to join us in our efforts to unblock international disarmament negotiations and start effective reform of the international disarmament machinery that will finally deliver results and take us forward to our ultimate goal — a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Let me first express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continuous efforts in promoting a world free of nuclear weapons.

I align my delegation with the statement made by Egypt at the 113th meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We also would like to thank the Netherlands for its statement delivered at the same meeting on behalf of 41 States, which we view as highly pertinent to the purposes of this debate.

The Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the review process of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty constitute the multilateral platform for States to work collectively to achieve our shared goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. For this reason, among others, the Conference in particular cannot forever remain deadlocked. We need to set the right priorities and concentrate all efforts on achieving them.

Moving forward, my delegation wishes to reiterate the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and to bring to conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control. We therefore wish to underscore that emphasis should

be given to the total elimination of nuclear weapons through the adoption of a nuclear weapons convention. It is imperative that the Conference on Disarmament commence its substantive work at the earliest opportunity, to enable further progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is also worth recalling that the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee were the outcomes of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are therefore of the view that these three organs are all accountable to the Assembly. In this connection, we support the convening of a fourth special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament, which could be instrumental in moving forward the disarmament agenda.

Another alternative that could also be considered is the possibility of reviewing the effectiveness of each entity through an eminent persons group, which would come up with recommendations for ways to revitalize the United Nations disarmament machinery. Malaysia mentioned this in its statement at the high-level meeting on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament held last year. It was also mentioned in the recommendation section of the recent report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. Malaysia is ready to explore any other feasible ideas put forward.

Transparency and complete inclusiveness should be the guiding principles of the Conference on Disarmament. We support expansion of the Conference and agree that further opportunity should be given to civil society to follow Conference proceedings in a meaningful manner.

Lastly, we cannot stress enough that genuine and strong political will exhibited by States in a tangible manner is absolutely vital to taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament and other organs of the United Nations. Malaysia is ready to work closely with other delegations to undertake this joint endeavour.

Mr. Fernández-Arias Minuesa (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain aligns itself with the statement made at the 113th meeting on behalf of the European Union.

A little less than a year ago, last 24 September, a high-level meeting was held under the auspices of the Secretary-General with the goal of evaluating the situation of the Conference on Disarmament and the reasons for its stalemate. That exercise led to a thorough analysis of the present situation, with wide participation on the part of ministers and other high-level representatives, as was recognized in resolution 65/93. This also highlights the commendably firm commitment of the Secretary-General, who has made revitalizing the disarmament machinery one of his priorities.

Regrettably, we must conclude that the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament has continued throughout 2011, with no sign of any resolution. The efforts and appeals to lift this negotiating body out of its stalemate have to date been fruitless.

It would be tempting to say that since we have made no progress, we are in the same place we were in a year ago. A year ago, however, we could feel confident that some positive momentum rising from a series of good news in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation — such as the signing of the New START Treaty, the Washington summit on nuclear security and the consensus for a plan of action based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference — would have a contagious effect on the Conference on Disarmament. However, that hope has still not materialized, and while the disarmament agenda is making progress in other forums, the Conference in Geneva continues to waste its means, efforts and energy for yet another year, without taking even the first step towards consensus in the form of adopting a programme of work — something it painstakingly achieved in 2009.

In recent years it has become commonplace to say that the Conference on Disarmament works but does not produce. Its abundant — perhaps excessive — schedule of meetings provides evidence of its labours. We have to wonder, however, if those labours, as arduous as they are unproductive, have any reason to be other than as a ritual for its own sake, considering that they are unable to unblock the negotiations.

It is indeed true that despite its inaction on negotiations, during the Conference's current session — and thanks to the laudable efforts of the Canadian, Chilean, Chinese and Colombian presidencies — countless formulas, initiatives and proposals have been brought up, many of which are very sound, in our view. It is not ideas that are lacking but rather sufficient consensus to bring them to fruition.

Given this critical convergence, which places us between the clamour from the international community and civil society for progress on disarmament and an ineffective or at any rate stalled disarmament machinery, what should be done?

The ideal would be progress within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, which in the past has shown itself to be an effective forum for international negotiation for such important achievements as the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Spain is committed to this course, as it demonstrated on 16 June, when, together with Germany, the Netherlands, Mexico, Sweden, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, it introduced document CD/1910, a joint discussion paper designed to stimulate debate on fissile material in the Conference on Disarmament.

One can continue bet on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament, but it would be a mistake to do so with infinite patience. Our task is too important and urgent to leave it to a single forum that for 14 years has shown itself incapable of fulfilling its mission. In other words, if the debate is couched in terms either of making progress in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation or of betting on the Conference on Disarmament, there can be only one response from all of us here, and it must be heard once and for all in a clear and unanimous manner.

But let us not anticipate events. For the time being, this meeting presents a new opportunity for exploring the causes of and possible solutions to the paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament, and we must not waste it. In that regard, we would like to join in the concrete proposals offered by the European Union. In particular, we call attention to the following.

First, we call on the Conference on Disarmament, the First Commission and the Disarmament Commission to review their working methods and duly examine the issue in their reports to the General Assembly, while requesting that the Assembly maintain its interest in this issue and its follow-up. Secondly, we call on States possessing nuclear weapons to declare and maintain a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. Lastly, we call on the member States of the Conference to initiate negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty without delay, and to begin working on the other items on the agenda.

We must be both bold and realistic as we explore and promote concrete proposals for the Conference on Disarmament, always keeping in mind that, as Alexis de Tocqueville said, institutions that we are accustomed to calling necessary are sometimes only institutions to which we have become accustomed.

Mr. Mahmood (Bangladesh): May I convey to you, Sir, the appreciation of the delegation of Bangladesh for scheduling this important plenary meeting as a follow-up to the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations, held on 24 September 2010.

I would like to associate myself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, I would like to dwell on certain core elements from our national perspective.

The agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on arms reduction is an important positive step after years of sluggishness in disarmament talks. This is a step in the right direction, but it is decidedly insufficient for freeing the planet from the curse of nuclear weapons. We hope that States parties will seize the moment at this plenary meeting, and that the meeting provides guidance to all of us, including the States that have yet to become parties to the relevant instruments, in achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh is a democratic, secular and inclusive society. My country, with its impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, is committed to the pursuit of universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Bangladesh has unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear by choice. We were the first annex 2 country from South Asia to ratify the CTBT. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including the additional protocols.

Bangladesh is constitutionally committed to achieving general and complete disarmament. As a

demonstration of that commitment, the Parliament of Bangladesh has also adopted a resolution supporting the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The resolution, inter alia, emphasized the need to implement all three pillars of the NPT, namely, nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It has also reiterated its support for article IV of the NPT, which guarantees the inalienable rights of all States parties to the NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of the Treaty, under the IAEA safeguards and verification mechanism. The Bangladesh Parliament, in its unanimous opinion, also expressed the belief that any use of nuclear weapons would constitute an international crime, including a crime against humanity, a crime against peace, a war crime and genocide. The Government of Bangladesh fully supports this parliamentary resolution.

Bangladesh steadfastly supports a multilateral approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We believe that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. We also support the work of the Disarmament Commission, which is the sole specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery.

We believe that weapons of mass destruction pose the gravest threat to humankind. We continue to believe that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons can provide a guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons and against the danger of such weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.

Bangladesh is convinced that, in addition to electricity generation, the peaceful uses of nuclear technology within the IAEA safeguards and verification regime may help tackle some old as well as contemporary development challenges that we confront, including hunger, disease, natural resource management and climate change. It is disconcerting to note that undue restrictions on exports of material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes to developing non-nuclear-weapon countries continue to persist through measures incompatible with the provisions of the Treaty. These barriers need to be removed.

It is a matter of concern that the nuclear-weapon States are not only adding more precision capability to the existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, but are also developing new types of weaponry. We stress that non-nuclear States parties to the NPT have a legitimate right to receive unconditional assurances from the nuclear-weapon States that the latter will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them.

Bangladesh also views the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda from a development perspective. Our conscience cannot justify an expenditure of about $1.5 trillion a year on armaments when developing countries, particularly least developed countries like Bangladesh, are struggling to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The full implementation of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, is critical to achieve this goal.

Let me reiterate that, notwithstanding everything to which I have referred, we have not lost faith in ourselves. While we acknowledge that our journey towards a nuclear-weapon-free world will not be easy, we do not believe that difficulties should deter us from beginning our quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world, for ourselves and for our children. We must leave behind a planet habitable for future generations. Let us resolve to make a difference today.

Mr. Taalas (Finland): I would like thank you, Sir, for convening this plenary meeting on this pressing topic.

Finland aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and on behalf of a group of like-minded countries delivered by the Netherlands.

Almost a year has passed since the High-level Meeting in New York last September, and we have not seen any progress. The reasons for this situation are well-known. The decade-long hiatus in the Conference on Disarmament negotiations threatens to unravel the system of multilateral disarmament negotiations. The United Nations disarmament machinery is in jeopardy. The situation requires political re-engagement and fresh thinking by all Member States. Business as usual is not an option. What we need most urgently is strong political will to restart multilateral disarmament negotiations. We hope this meeting will serve to crystallize this will.

We need to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on

Disarmament without delay. It would take us a step closer to our goal of a world without nuclear weapons and would be essential for our non-proliferation efforts. A fissile material cut-off treaty would contribute to implementing all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament must embrace the momentum for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as manifested in the New START Treaty and at the Nuclear Security Summit. Finland urges all Member States to work towards complete nuclear disarmament through concrete actions.

There are also some practical steps we can take in order to revitalize the work in the United Nations disarmament machinery.

First, we should review the working methods of the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. We need more substantial discussion and search for common ground, and less procedure.

Secondly, multilateral negotiations demand the participation of all relevant players. Reviewing the Conference on Disarmament's membership base is warranted in order to ensure its inclusiveness.

Thirdly, we need fresh ideas and a better connection to the realities outside United Nations meeting rooms. We should strengthen the voice of civil society and academia and find ways to make better use of their valuable contribution in our work.

We are committed to doing our utmost to advance multilateral disarmament negotiations during Finland's chairmanship of the First Committee during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We hope that, with the political re-engagement of all Member States, we can together take the revitalization agenda forward.

Mr. Tladi (South Africa): South Africa is thankful for this opportunity to have an open and honest discussion about the multilateral disarmament agenda and, in particular, for the opportunity to examine the progress that has been made since the adoption of resolution 65/93 on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Egypt, who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the representative of the Netherlands, who spoke on behalf of a group of States from various regions around the world.

One of the outcomes of the first special session on the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) was to recognize the need for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus — what we know today as the Conference on Disarmament. The past achievements of the Conference and its predecessor entities have illustrated the role that this body can play in the negotiation of key multilateral disarmament instruments. It is therefore regrettable that this institution has for many years now failed to fulfil its basic mandate. As a result of the continuing deadlock, many have understandably started to question the Conference's relevance and continued value in the pursuit of disarmament goals, especially since the dawn of the new international security environment after the end of the Cold War.

Another decision of SSOD-I was the establishment of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body on disarmament and a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, this body is also not fulfilling its mandate and has again this year failed to produce any concrete recommendations.

Nuclear disarmament remains our highest priority, which is a priority shared by all members of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 21 and the vast majority of States Members of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations across all regions. Not only do we share concerns about the continued vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, but we believe that the very existence of nuclear weapons contributes to global insecurity.

Furthermore, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons clearly represent a serious risk to humankind. While these weapons exist, none of us will truly be secure. Only the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again can provide the necessary guarantees against their use. It is for this reason that South Africa has consistently argued for a systematic and progressive approach towards achieving our goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. We believe that continuous and irreversible progress in nuclear

disarmament and other related nuclear arms control measures remains fundamental to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation.

The lack of real progress towards nuclear disarmament has weakened the global non-proliferation regime. Although nuclear disarmament was the subject of the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946 (resolution 1 (I)), it has been the first item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament since the Conference's inception. Despite the ongoing demand by the overwhelming majority of members of the Conference for the establishment of a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament alone, that has not materialized. That is particularly disconcerting given that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have committed to this goal in the Action Plan adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. My delegation therefore reiterates its call to the Conference on Disarmament to immediately establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament.

As part of the systematic and progressive approach to nuclear disarmament, my delegation also supports the commencement of negotiations on a treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices and that would fulfil both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. My delegation does not subscribe to the view that a fissile material treaty is the only item ripe for negotiations. Given the nature of the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating forum, we believe that the Conference is able to negotiate on any issue on its agenda, although we acknowledge that the finalization of any internationally legally binging arrangements in the near future may be more likely on some issues than on others.

While we may not all agree on the issues that are either more or less ripe for the conclusion of an agreement, that should not prevent us from dealing substantively with the issues on the multilateral disarmament agenda. The question that confronts us today is whether the Conference on Disarmament is able to live up to our expectations or whether alternative options should be explored for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations in an effort to revitalize the work that should have been undertaken by this body.

We acknowledge that the Conference on Disarmament came close to resuming its work in 2009 when it adopted a programme of work. While CD/1864 was not a perfect document, it was our hope that it would have led to a new phase in the Conference's recent history that would have allowed us to work together to build a better, more secure future. Unfortunately, neither CD/1864 nor any other formula on mandates for subsidiary bodies on items on our agenda has led to a resumption of substantive work.

While some would ascribe the lack of concrete results in the Conference on Disarmament to its rules of procedure, my delegation believes that the resistance by some to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control, is a larger obstacle faced by the international community.

Many of us would like to see the Conference on Disarmament resume its rightful place. However, its continued failure to engage in substantive work over the past 15 years does not allow us to be indifferent to the ongoing challenges. If the Conference continues to fail in executing its mandate, there would be no reason not to consider other options in taking forward the important work that this body has been entrusted with.

In conclusion, South Africa remains committed to a rules-based international system. We will therefore pursue any further actions that may be required with a view to strengthening multilateral governance in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In addition, we will examine any options for taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations with the aim of achieving our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers tomorrow, 29 July, at 11 a.m. in the Hall. At that meeting, the Assembly will also take up agenda item 13 to continue its discussion on the human right to water and sanitation.

Before concluding this meeting, a representative has requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind Member States that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Tong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Let me exercise the right of reply and at the same time make some comments on the remarks made by the representative of Canada, who raised a question about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

As far as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea presidency of the Conference is concerned, it is an exercise of the sovereign right of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a State Member of the United Nations, to be President of the Conference on Disarmament. Under the Conference on Disarmament's rules of procedure, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is obligated to serve as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

In addition, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is and has been a State Member of the United Nations. Article 2, paragraph of 1, of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates that the United Nations is based on the principle of respect for the sovereign equality of all Members States. As far as this legal issue is concerned, we consider the remarks by the representative of Canada to be in serious violation of the United Nations Charter.

Secondly, the remarks of the representative of Canada were in violation of the practice in international forums. This would not be the first time that the Canadian delegation has boycotted an international forum. The first time was in 2001, when there was an anti-racism conference in Durban. Canada was the only country that boycotted that meeting. It set a very disgraceful precedent in the practice of international multilateralism.

That was not the only instance of a Canadian boycott. It occurred again in other meetings, including here at the General Assembly while one country's president was delivering a speech — right in this forum. This is the third time that a Canadian representative has taken such action in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea therefore strongly condemns this behaviour by the Canadian representative.

Thirdly, this is a demonstration of Cold-War-era psychology and mentality. Actually, this is now the post-Cold-War period. It was only during the time of the Cold War that we witnessed such confrontational behaviour by countries. The post-Cold-War period is a time for dialogue and confidence-building. One can see this in every region, including in the Asian region. Canada and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea participate as members of the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The overall spirit is one of confidence-building and dialogue. But now, rather than adopting that behaviour of dialogue and reconciliation, Canada has taken the road to confrontation. The Canadian representative is the only one adopting that kind of behaviour.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.